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ANTONINA;

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THE FALL OF ROME.

A Romance of the Fifth Century.

By W. WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF WILLIAM COLLINS, R.A."

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"La ville cesse d'être :
Le Romain est esclave, et le Goth est son maître."
SCUDÉRI, "*Alarique.*"

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

LADY CHANTREY,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE DEDICATED,

AS A SLIGHT BUT SINCERE TESTIMONY OF ESTEEM AND REGARD,

FROM

THE AUTHOR.

FEBRUARY, 1850.

PREFACE.

THE remarkable historical events which have been chosen, to originate the following story, are amply and brilliantly detailed in the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." The origin and progress of the Gothic invasion of Italy under Alaric; those social and political convulsions within the Empire, which concurred with the attacks from without in ultimately producing the memorable overthrow of the whole Roman power; those occurrences attending the first barbarian siege of the Imperial City, which the present Romance is intended to reproduce, and which

essentially mark the commencing epoch of the "Fall of Rome;" will all be found by the reader who may not be previously acquainted with the subject, in the pages of the great history already mentioned.

Whenever it has been thought probable that some desire might be felt to test the historical accuracy of particular passages, the proper notes have been inserted at the foot of the page, where little more than a reference to chapter and book was requisite; but where some extent of quotation appeared necessary, the reader is referred to the Appendix at the end of each Volume.

Believing that the work of Gibbon would be more easily attainable to all classes of readers than any of the other ancient and modern authorities which he had consulted the Author has taken care to refer, on all

possible occasions, to the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," except in cases where the introduction of minute historical particulars, which importantly influenced the story, seemed to require the production of the various historical sources (mostly ancient) from which they had been drawn.

It will be observed, that the only two historical personages introduced in the following pages, (the Emperor Honorius and Alaric,) appear as characters of secondary importance, as regards the conduct of the story. Upon consideration of the principle on which he should write, the Author doubted the propriety (in *his* case, at least,) of selecting heroes and heroines from the real personages of the period. He feared, on this plan, that while he was necessarily adding from invention to what was actually known, *his* fiction

might be placed in unfavourable contrast with truth, and that he might be unable to carry out his story, written upon such a system, without confusing or falsifying dates; thus failing in one main object of his anxiety, viz., to make his plot invariably arise, and proceed out of, the great historical events of the era, exactly in the order in which they occurred.

Under these circumstances, he thought that by forming all his principal characters from imagination, he should be able to mould them as he pleased to the main necessities of the story; to display them, without any impropriety, as influenced in whatever manner appeared most strikingly interesting by its minor incidents; and, further, to make them on all occasions, without trammel or hindrance, the practical exponents of the spirit

of the age, of all the various historical illustrations of the period which the Author's researches among conflicting but equally important authorities, had enabled him to garner up. While, at the same time, the appearance of verisimilitude necessary to an historical romance might, he imagined, be successfully preserved by the occasional introduction of the living characters of the period, in those portions of the plot comprising events with which they had been remarkably connected.

Some discrepancy in the length of the different chapters of the romance may also be noticed. One chapter may be considered as extended unnecessarily to fifty or sixty pages, while another is arbitrarily shortened to twenty or thirty. This is, however, not the result of accident or carelessness.

Knowing that his work must be arranged in divisions, the author thought it best to let the plot divide itself; to end each chapter only when a pause naturally occurred in the events that it related; and each Book and Volume, only when each portion of the story reached its grand climax, in preference to preserving arithmetical symmetry by giving to every division of the narrative an equal number of pages. By this plan, it was thought that the different passages in the story might be most forcibly contrasted one with another, that each scene, while it preserved its separate interest to the mind of the reader, might most clearly appear to be combining to form one complete whole; that, in the painter's phrase, the "effects" might thus be best "massed," and the "lights and shadows" most harmoniously "balanced" and "discriminated."

The author hopes that his motives in making these explanations will not be misunderstood. They are not obtruded on the reader from any desire to present them as worthy of attention in themselves, but solely as tending to prove that he did not enter on his undertaking, such as it was, without some thought, some plan of arrangement by which he should proceed. He is well aware that he has ventured greatly in appearing before the public as the writer of a romance, at a period when so much that is admirable in fiction is already addressed to them, and he is anxious for this very reason to be permitted to explain —whatever the reception which may be accorded to his book—that he did not begin to write it without careful consideration of the task he was imposing on himself, or without forming a system to work on, which whether

good or bad, was at any rate the best that his ingenuity could invent.

There are other matters connected with many passages in the present work, which might be referred to in these pages of introduction, but to notice them now would, it is feared, be to make too large a demand upon the reader's patience. If the book cannot of itself appeal to some of his sympathies, it is useless to attempt to awaken them here —if it can, it is most fit and most desirable that it should be left to speak on its own merits.

LONDON,
February 21, 1850.

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BOOK FIRST.

"O DEI, VENGANO!"

Metastasio.

ANTONINA;

OR,

THE FALL OF ROME.

CHAPTER I.

GOISVINTHA.

The mountains forming the range of Alps which border on the north-eastern confines of Italy, were, in the autumn of the year 408, already furrowed in numerous directions by the tracks of the invading forces of those northern nations generally comprised under the appellation of Goths. In some places, these tracks were denoted on either side by fallen trees, and occasionally assumed, when half obliterated by the ravages of storms, the appearance of desolate and irregular marshes. In other places, they were less palpable. Here, the temporary path was entirely hidden by the

incursions of a swollen torrent; there, it was faintly perceptible in occasional patches of soft ground, or partly traceable by fragments of abandoned armour, skeletons of horses and men, and remnants of the rude bridges which had once served for passage across a river, or transit over a precipice.

Among the rocks of the topmost of the range of mountains immediately overhanging the plains of Italy, and presenting the last barrier to the exertions of a traveller, or the march of an invader, there lay, at the beginning of the fifth century, a little lake. Bounded on three sides by precipices, its narrow banks barren alike of verdure or habitations, and its dark, stagnant waters, brightened but rarely by the presence of the lively sunlight; this solitary spot—at all times mournful—presented, on the autumn day when our story commences, an aspect of desolation at once dismal to the eye and oppressive to the heart.

It was near noon; but no sun appeared in the heaven. The dull clouds, monotonous in colour and form, hid all beauty in the firmament, and

shed heavy darkness on the earth. Dense, stagnant vapours clung to the mountain summits; from the drooping trees dead leaves and rotten branches sunk, at intervals, on the oozy soil, or whirled over the gloomy precipice; and a small, steady rain fell, slow and unintermitting, upon the deserts around. Standing upon the path which armies had once trodden, and which armies were still destined to tread, and looking towards the solitary lake, you heard, at first, no sound but the regular dripping of the rain-drops from rock to rock; you saw no prospect but the motionless waters at your feet, and the dusky crags which shadowed them from above. When, however, impressed by the mysterious loneliness of the place, the eye grew more penetrating, and the ear more attentive, a cavern became apparent in the precipices round the lake; and, in the intervals of the heavy rain-drops, were faintly perceptible the sounds of a human voice.

The mouth of the cavern was partly concealed by a large stone, on which were piled some masses of rotten brushwood, as if for the purpose of pro-

tecting any inhabitant it might contain from the coldness of the atmosphere without. Placed at the eastward boundary of the lake, this strange place of refuge commanded a view, not only of the rugged path immediately below it, but of a large plot of level ground at a short distance to the west, which overhung a second and lower range of rocks. From this spot might be seen far beneath, on days when the atmosphere was clear, the olive grounds that clothed the mountain's base; and, beyond, stretching away to the distant horizon, the plains of fated Italy, whose destiny of defeat and shame was now hastening to its dark and fearful accomplishment.

The cavern, within, was low and irregular in form. From its rugged walls, the damp oozed forth upon its floor of decayed moss. Lizards and noisome animals had tenanted its comfortless recesses undisturbed, until the period we have just described, when their miserable rights were infringed on for the first time by human intruders.

A woman crouched near the entrance of the

place. More within, on the driest part of the ground, lay a child asleep. Between them were scattered some withered branches and decayed leaves, which were arranged as if to form a fire. In many parts this scanty collection of fuel was slightly blackened; but, wetted as it was by the rain, all efforts to light it permanently had evidently been fruitless.

The woman's head was bent forwards, and her face, hid in her hands, rested on her knees. At intervals she muttered to herself, in a hoarse, moaning voice. A portion of her scanty clothing had been removed to cover the child. What remained on her was composed, partly of skins of animals, partly of coarse cotton cloth. In many places this miserable dress was marked with blood, and her long, flaxen hair bore upon its dishevelled locks the same ominous and repulsive stain.

The child seemed scarcely four years of age, and showed on his pale, thin face all the peculiarities of his Gothic origin. His features seemed to have been once beautiful, both in expression and form; but a deep wound, extending the whole

length of his cheek, had now deformed him for ever. He shivered and trembled in his sleep, and every now and then mechanically stretched forth his little arms towards the dead, cold branches that were scattered before him. Suddenly a large stone became detached from the rock in a distant part of the cavern, and fell noisily to the ground. At this sound he woke with a scream—raised himself—endeavoured to advance towards the woman, and staggered backward against the side of the cave. A second wound in the leg had wreaked that destruction on his vigour, which the first had effected on his beauty. He was a cripple.

At the instant of his awakening the woman had started up. She now raised him from the ground, and taking some herbs from her bosom applied them to his wounded cheek. By this action her dress became discomposed: it was stiff at the top with coagulated blood, which had evidently flowed from a cut in her neck. All her attempts to compose the child were in vain; he moaned and wept piteously, muttering, at intervals, his disjointed exclamations of impatience at the coldness of the

place and the agony of his recent wounds. Speechless and tearless the wretched woman looked vacantly down on his face. There was little difficulty in discerning from that fixed, distracted gaze the nature of the tie that bound the mourning woman to the suffering boy. The expression of rigid and awful despair that lowered in her fixed, gloomy eyes; the livid paleness that discoloured her compressed lips; the spasms that shook her firm, commanding form, mutely expressing in the divine eloquence of human emotion, that between the solitary pair there existed the most intimate of earth's relationships—the connexion of mother and child.

For some time no change occurred in the woman's demeanour. At last, as if struck by some sudden suspicion, she rose, and clasping the child in one arm, displaced with the other the brushwood at the entrance of her place of refuge, and cautiously looked forth on all that the mists left visible of the western landscape. After a short survey, she drew back as if re-assured by the unbroken solitude of the place, and turning

towards the lake, looked down upon the black waters at her feet.

"Night has succeeded to night," she muttered gloomily; "and has brought no succour to my body, and no hope to my heart! Mile on mile have I journeyed, and danger is still behind, and loneliness for ever before. The shadow of death deepens over the boy; the burden of anguish grows weightier than I can bear. For *me*, friends are murdered, defenders are distant, possessions are lost. The God of the Christian priests has abandoned us to danger, and deserted us in woe. It is for me to end the struggle for us both. Our last refuge has been in this place—our sepulchre shall be here as well!"

With one last look at the cold and comfortless sky, she advanced to the very edge of the lake's precipitous bank. Already the child was raised in her arms, and her body bent to accomplish successfully the fatal spring, when a sound in the east—faint, distant and fugitive,—caught her ear. In an instant her eye brightened, her chest heaved, her cheek flushed. She exerted the last relics of her wasted

strength to gain a prominent position upon a ledge of the rocks behind her, and waited in an agony of expectation for a repetition of that magic sound.

Ere long she heard it again—for the child, stupefied with terror at the action that had accompanied her determination to plunge with him into the lake, now kept silence, and she could listen undisturbed. To unpractised ears, the sound that so entranced her would have been scarcely audible. Even the experienced traveller would have thought it nothing more than the echo of a falling stone among the rocks in the eastward distance. But to her it was no unimportant sound, for it gave the welcome signal of deliverance and delight.

As the hour wore on, it came nearer and nearer, tossed about by the sportive echoes, and now clearly betraying that its origin was, as she had at first divined, the note of the Gothic trumpet. Soon the distant music ceased, and was succeeded by another sound low and rumbling, as of an earthquake afar off, or a rising thunder-storm, and changing, ere long, to a harsh confused

noise, like the rustling of a mighty wind through whole forests of brushwood. At this instant the woman lost all command over herself; her former patience and caution deserted her; reckless of danger, she placed the child upon the ledge on which she had been standing; and, though trembling in every limb, succeeded in mounting so much higher on the crag as to gain a fissure near the top of the rock, which commanded an uninterrupted view of the vast tracts of uneven ground, leading in an easterly direction to the next range of precipices and ravines.

One after another, the long minutes glided on; and, though much was still audible, nothing was yet to be seen. At length, the shrill sound of the trumpet again rang through the dull misty air; and the next instant the advanced guard of an army of Goths emerged from the distant woods.

Then, after an interval, the multitudes of the main body thronged through every outlet in the trees, and spread in dusky masses over the desert ground that lay between the woods and the rocks

about the borders of the lake. The front ranks halted as if to communicate with the crowds of the rear-guard and the stragglers among the baggage waggons, who still poured forth, apparently in interminable hosts, from the concealment of the distant trees. The advanced troops, evidently with the intention of examining the roads, still marched rapidly on, until they gained the foot of the ascent leading to the crags to which the woman still clung, and from which, with eager attention, she still watched their movements.

Placed in a situation of the extremest peril, her strength was her only preservative against the danger of slipping from her high and narrow elevation. Hitherto, the moral excitement of expectation had given her the physical power necessary to maintain her position; but, just as the leaders of the guard arrived at the cavern, her over-wrought energies suddenly deserted her; her hands relaxed their grasp; she tottered, and would have sunk backwards to instant destruction, had not the skins wrapped about her bosom and

waist become entangled with a point of one of the jagged rocks immediately around her. Fortunately —for she could utter no cry—the troops halted at this instant to enable their horses to gain breath. Two among them at once perceived her position and detected her nation. They mounted the rocks; and, while one possessed himself of the child, the other succeeded in rescuing the mother and bearing her safely to the ground.

The snorting of horses, the clashing of weapons, the confusion of loud, rough voices, which now startled the native silence of the solitary lake, and which would have bewildered and overwhelmed most persons in the woman's exhausted condition, seemed, on the contrary, to re-assure her feelings and re-animate her powers. She disengaged herself from her preserver's support; and taking her child in her arms, advanced towards a man of gigantic stature, whose rich armour sufficiently announced that his position in the army was one of command.

"I am Goisvintha"—said she in a firm, calm voice—"sister to Hermanric. I have escaped

from the massacre of the hostages in Aquileia with one child. Is my brother with the army of the King?"

This declaration produced a marked change in the bystanders. The looks of indifference, or curiosity, which they had at first cast on the fugitive, changed to the liveliest expressions of wonder and respect. The chieftain whom she had addressed raised the visor of his helmet so as to uncover his face, answered her question in the affirmative, and ordered two soldiers to conduct her to the temporary encampment of the main army in the rear. As she turned to depart, an old man advanced, leaning on his long, heavy sword, and accosted her thus:—

"I am Withimer whose daughter was left hostage with the Romans, in Aquileia. Is she of the slain, or of the escaped?"

"Her bones rot under the city walls," was the answer. "The Romans made of her a feast for the dogs."

No word, or tear, escaped the old warrior. He turned in the direction of Italy; but, as he looked

downwards towards the plains, his brow lowered, and his hands tightened mechanically round the hilt of his enormous weapon.

The same gloomy question was propounded to Goisvintha by the two men who guided her to the army, that had been asked by their aged comrade. It received the same terrible answer, which was borne with the same stern composure, and followed by the same ominous glance in the direction of Italy, as in the instance of the veteran Withimer.

Leading the horse that carried the exhausted woman with the utmost care, and yet with wonderful rapidity, down the paths which they had so recently ascended, the men, in a short space of time, reached the place where the army had halted; and displayed to Goisvintha, in all the majesty of numbers and repose, the vast martial assemblage of the warriors of the North.

No brightness gleamed from their armour; no banners waved over their heads; no music sounded among their ranks. Backed by the dreary woods which still disgorged unceasing additions to the warlike multitude already encamped; surrounded

by the desolate crags which showed dim, wild, and majestic, through the darkness of the gloomy mist; covered by the dusky clouds which hovered motionless over the barren mountain-tops, and poured their stormy waters on the uncultivated plains; all that the appearance of the Goths had of solemnity in itself, was in awful harmony with the cold and mournful aspect that the face of Nature had assumed. Silent—menacing—dark,—the army looked the fit embodiment of its leader's tremendous purpose—the subjugation of Rome.

Conducting Goisvintha quickly through the front files of warriors, her guides, pausing at a spot of ground which shelved upwards at right angles with the main road from the woods, desired her to dismount; and, pointing to the group that occupied the place, said: "Yonder is Alaric the king; and with him, is Hermanric thy brother."

At whatever point of view it could have been regarded, the assemblage of persons thus indicated to Goisvintha must have arrested inattention itself. Near a confused mass of weapons, scattered on the ground, reclined a group of warriors apparently

listening to the low, muttered conversation of three men of great age, who rose above them, seated on pieces of rock, and whose long, white hair, rough skin dresses, and lean tottering forms, appeared in strong contrast with the iron-clad and gigantic figures of their auditors beneath. Above the old men, on the high road, was one of Alaric's waggons; and on the heaps of baggage piled against its clumsy wheels, had been chosen the resting-place of the future conqueror of Rome. The top of the vehicle seemed absolutely teeming with a living burden. Perched in every available nook and corner, were women and children of all ages, and weapons and live stock of all varieties. Now, a child —lively, mischievous, inquisitive—peered forth over the head of a battering ram. Now, a lean, hungry sheep, advanced his inquiring nostrils sadly to the open air; and displayed by the movement, the head of a withered old woman, pillowed on his woolly flanks. Here, appeared a young girl, struggling half entombed in shields. There, gasped an emaciated camp-follower, nearly suffocated in heaps of furs. The whole scene, with its background of

great woods, drenched in a vapour of misty rain; with its striking contrasts at one point and its solemn harmonies at another, presented a vast combination of objects that either startled or awed; —a gloomy conjunction of the menacing and the sublime.

Bidding Goisvintha wait near the waggon, one of her conductors approached and motioned aside a young man standing near the king. As the warrior rose to obey the demand, he displayed with all the physical advantages of his race an ease and elasticity of movement, unusual among the men of his nation. At the instant when he joined the soldier who had accosted him, his face was partially concealed by an immense helmet, crowned with a boar's head, the mouth of which, forced open at death, gaped wide, as if still raging for prey. But the man had scarcely stated his errand, when he startled violently, removed the grim appendage of war, and hastened bare-headed to the side of the waggon where Goisvintha awaited his approach.

The instant he was beheld by the woman, she

hastened to meet him; placed the wounded child in his arms, and greeted him with these words:—

"Your brother served in the armies of Rome when our people were at peace with the Empire. Of his household and his possessions this is all that the Romans have left!"

She ceased; and for an instant the brother and sister regarded each other in touching and expressive silence. Though, in addition to the general characteristics of country, the countenances of the two, naturally bore the more particular evidences of community of blood, all resemblance between them, at this instant—so wonderful is the power of expression over feature — had utterly vanished. The face and manner of the young man, (he had numbered only twenty years,) expressed a deep sorrow; manly in its stern tranquillity; sincere in its perfect innocence of display. As he looked on the child, his blue eyes—bright, piercing, and lively—softened like a woman's; his lips, hardly hidden by his short beard, closed and quivered; and his chest heaved under the armour that lay upon its noble proportions. There was in this

simple, speechless, tearless melancholy—this exquisite consideration of triumphant strength for suffering weakness, something almost sublime; opposed as it was to the emotions of malignity and despair, that appeared in Goisvintha's features. The ferocity that gleamed from her dilated, glaring eyes; the sinister markings that appeared round her pale and parted lips; the swelling of the large veins, drawn to their extremest point of tension on her lofty forehead, so distorted her countenance, that the brother and sister, as they stood together, seemed in expression to have changed sexes for the moment. From the warrior, came pity for the sufferer—from the mother, indignation for the offence.

Turning from his melancholy contemplation of the child, and as yet addressing not a word to Goisvintha, Hermanric mounted the waggon, and placing the last of his sister's offspring in the arms of a decrepid old woman, who sat brooding over some bundles of herbs spread out upon her lap, addressed her thus:—

"These wounds are from the Romans. Revive

the child, and you shall be rewarded from the spoils of Rome."

"Ha! ha! ha!" chuckled the crone; "Hermanric is an illustrious warrior, and shall be obeyed. Hermanric is great, for his arm can slay; but Brunechild is greater than he, for her cunning can cure!"

As if anxious to verify this boast before the warrior's eyes, the old woman immediately began the preparation of the necessary dressings from her store of herbs; but Hermanric waited not to be a witness of her skill. With one final look at the pale exhausted child, he slowly descended from the waggon, and approaching Goisvintha, drew her towards the most sheltered position near the ponderous vehicle, and prepared to listen with the deepest attention to the recital of the scenes of terror and suffering through which she had so recently passed.

"You," she began, "born while our nation was at peace; transported from the field of war, to those distant provinces where tranquillity still prevailed; preserved throughout your childhood

from the chances of battle; advanced to the army in your youth, only when its toils are past, and its triumphs are already at hand—you alone, have escaped the miseries of our people, to partake in the glory of their approaching revenge.

"Hardly had a year passed since you had been removed from the settlements of the Goths when I wedded Priulf. The race of triflers to whom he was then allied, spite of their Roman haughtiness, deferred to him in their councils, and confessed among their legions that he was brave. I saw myself with joy the wife of a warrior of renown; I believed, in my pride, that I was destined to be the mother of a race of heroes; when suddenly there came news to us that the Emperor Theodosius was dead. Then followed anarchy among the people of the soil, and outrages on the liberties of their allies, the Goths. Ere long, the call to arms arose among our nation. Soon our waggons of war were rolled across the frozen Danube; our soldiers quitted the Roman camp; our husbandmen took their weapons from their cottage walls; we that were women prepared with our children

to follow our husbands to the field; and Alaric, the king, came forth as the leader of our hosts.

"We marched upon the territories of the Greeks.—But how shall I tell you of the events of those years of war that followed our invasion; of the glory of our victories; of the hardships of our defences; of the miseries of our retreats; of the hunger that we vanquished; of the diseases that we endured; of the shameful peace that was finally ratified, against the wishes of our king! How shall I tell of all this, when my thoughts are on the massacre from which I have just escaped—when those first evils, though once remembered in anguish, are, even now, forgotten in the superior horrors that ensued!

"The truce was made. Alaric departed with the remnant of his army, and encamped at Æmona, on the confines of that land which he had already invaded, and which he is prepared to conquer, now. Between our king and Stilicho, the general of the Romans, passed many messages, for the leaders disputed on the terms of the peace that should be finally ordained. Meanwhile, as an

earnest of the Gothic faith, bands of our warriors, and among them Priulf, were despatched into Italy to be allies once more of the legions of Rome, and with them they took their wives, their children, and their possessions, to be detained as their hostages in the cities throughout the land.

"I and my children were conducted to Aquileia. In a dwelling within the city we were lodged with our possessions. It was night when I took leave of Priulf, my husband, at the gates. I watched him as he departed with the army, and, when the darkness hid him from my eyes, I re-entered the town; from which I am the only woman of our nation who has escaped alive."

As she pronounced these last words, Goisvintha's manner, which had been hitherto calm and collected, began to change; she paused abruptly in her narration, her head sunk upon her breast, her frame quivered as if convulsed with violent agony. When she turned towards Hermanric after an interval of silence to continue her recital, the same malignant expression lowered over her countenance that had appeared on it, when she presented to

him her wounded child; her voice became broken, hoarse, and unfeminine; and pressing closely to the young man's side, she laid her trembling fingers on his arm, as if to bespeak his most undivided attention.

"Time grew on," she continued, "and still there came no tidings that the peace was finally secured. We, that were hostages, lived separate from the people of the town; for we felt enmity towards each other even then. In my captivity there was no employment for me, but patience—no pursuit, but hope. Alone with my children, I was wont to look forth over the sea, towards the camp of our King; but day succeeded to day, and his warriors appeared not on the plains; nor did Priulf return with the legions to encamp before the gates of the town. So, I mourned in my loneliness; for my heart yearned towards the homes of my people; I longed once more to look upon my husband's face, and to behold again the ranks of our warriors, and the majesty of their battle array.

"But, already, when the great day of despair

was quickly drawing near, a bitter outrage was preparing for *me alone*. The men who had hitherto watched us were changed, and of the number of the new guards, was one, who cast on me the eyes of lust. Night after night, he poured his entreaties into my unwilling ear; for, in his vanity and shamelessness, he believed that I, who was Gothic and the wife of a Goth, might be won by him whose parentage was but Roman! Soon, from prayers he rose to threats; and, one night appearing before me with smiles, he cried out—that Stilicho, whose desire was to make peace with the Goths, had suffered, for his devotion to our people, the penalty of death; that a time of ruin was approaching for us all; and that he alone—whom I despised—could preserve me from the anger of Rome. As he ceased he approached me; but I, who had been in many battle-fields, felt no dread at the prospect of war; and I spurned him with laughter from my presence.

"Then, for a few nights more, my enemy approached me not again. Until, one evening, as I sat on the terrace before the house, with the child

that you have beheld, a helmet-crest suddenly fell at my feet, and a voice cried to me from the garden beneath—'Priulf thy husband has been slain in a quarrel by the soldiers of Rome! Already the legions with whom he served are on their way to the town; for a massacre of the hostages is ordained. Speak but the word, and I can save thee, even yet!'

"I looked on the crest. It was bloody, and it was *his!* For an instant my heart writhed within me, as I thought on my warrior whom I had loved! Then, as I heard the messenger of death retire, cursing, from his lurking-place in the garden, I recollected that now my children had none but their mother to defend them; and that peril was preparing for them from the enemies of their race. Besides the little one in my arms, I had two that were sleeping in the house. As I looked round, bewildered and in despair, to see if a chance were left us to escape, there rang through the evening stillness the sound of a trumpet; and the tramp of armed men was audible in the street beneath. Then, from all quarters of the town,

rose, as one sudden sound, the shrieks of women and the yells of men. Already, as I rushed towards my children's beds, the fiends of Rome had mounted the stairs, and waved in bloody triumph their reeking swords! I gained the steps, and as I looked up, they flung down at me the body of my youngest child. Oh, Hermanric! Hermanric! it was the most beautiful and the most beloved! What the priests say that God should be to us, that, the fairest one of my offspring, was to me! As I saw it mutilated and dead—I, who but an hour before, had hushed it on my bosom to rest! —my courage forsook me, and when the murderers advanced on me, I staggered and fell. I felt the sword-point enter my neck; I saw the dagger gleam over the child in my arms; I heard the death-shriek of the last victim above; and then my senses failed me, and I could listen and move no more!

"Long must I have lain motionless at the foot of those fatal stairs; for when I awoke from my trance, the noises in the city were hushed; and from her place in the firmament the moon shone

softly into the deserted house. I listened, to be certain that I was alone with my murdered children. No sound was in the dwelling; the assassins had departed, believing that their labour of blood was ended when I fell beneath their swords; and I was able to crawl forth in security, and to look my last upon my offspring that the Romans had slain. The child that I held to my breast still breathed. I staunched with some fragments of my garment the wounds that he had received, and laying him gently by the stairs—in the moonlight, so that I might see him when he moved—I groped in the shadow of the wall for my first murdered and my last born: for that youngest and fairest one of my offspring, whom they had slaughtered before my eyes! When I touched the corpse, it was wet with blood; I felt its face and it was cold beneath my hands; I raised its body in my arms, and its limbs already were rigid in death! Then I thought of the eldest child, who lay dead in the chamber above. But my strength was failing me fast. I had an infant who might yet be preserved; and I knew that if morning

dawned on me in the house, all chances of escape were lost to me for ever. So—though my heart was cold within me, at leaving my child's corpse to the mercy of the Romans—I took up the dead and the wounded one in my arms, and went forth into the garden, and thence towards the seaward quarter of the town.

"I passed through the forsaken streets. Sometimes I stumbled against the body of a child—sometimes the moonlight showed me the death-pale face of some woman of my nation, whom I had loved, stretched upward to the sky; but I still pressed on until I gained the wall of the town, and heard on the other side the waves breaking softly upon the level surface of the beach.

"I looked around. The gates I knew were guarded and closed. By the wall was the only prospect of escape; but its top was high and its sides were smooth, when I felt them with my hands. Despairing and wearied, I laid my burdens down where they were hidden by the shade, and walked onward a few paces, for to

remain still was a torment that I could not endure. At a short distance, I saw a soldier sleeping against the wall of a house. By his side was a ladder placed against the window. As I looked up, I beheld the head of a corpse resting on its top. The victim must have been lately slain, for her blood still dripped slowly down into an empty wine-pot that stood within the soldier's reach. When I saw the ladder hope revived within me. I removed it to the wall—I mounted and laid my dead child on the great stones at its top—I returned, and placed my wounded boy by the corpse. Slowly and with many efforts, I dragged the ladder upwards, until from its own weight one end fell to the ground on the other side. As I had arisen so I descended. In the sand of the beach I scraped a hole, and buried there the corpse of the infant; for I could carry the weight of two no longer. Then with my wounded child I reached some caverns that lay onward by the shore. There throughout the next day I lay hidden—alone with my sufferings of body, and my affliction of heart —until the night came on, when I set forth on my

journey to the mountains; for I knew that at Æmona, in the camp of the warriors of my people, lay the only refuge that was left to me on earth. Feebly and slowly, hiding by day and travelling by night, I kept on my way until I gained that lake among the rocks, where the guards of the army came forward and rescued me from death."

She ceased. Throughout the latter portion of her recital, her demeanour had been calm and sad, and as she dwelt, with the painful industry of grief, over each minute circumstance connected with the bereavements she had sustained, her voice softened to those accents of quiet mournfulness, which make impressive the most simple words, and render musical the most unsteady tones. It seemed as if those tenderer and kinder emotions, which the attractions of her offspring had once generated in her character, had at the bidding of memory become revivified in her manner, while she lingered over the recital of their deaths. For a brief space of time she looked fixedly and, anxiously upon the countenance of Hermanric

which was half averted from her, and expressed a fierce and revengeful gloom that sat unnaturally on its noble lineaments. Then turning from him, she buried her face in her hands, and made no effort more to attract him to attention, or incite him to reply.

This solemn silence kept by the bereaved woman and the brooding man had lasted but a few minutes, when a harsh trembling voice, was heard from the top of the waggon, calling at intervals—"Hermanric! Hermanric!"

At first the young man remained unmoved by those discordant and repulsive tones. They repeated his name, however, so often and so perseveringly, that he noticed them ere long; and suddenly, rising as if impatient of the interruption, advanced towards the side of the waggon from which the mysterious summons appeared to come.

As he looked up towards the vehicle the voice ceased; and he saw that the old woman to whom he had confided the child, was the person who had called him so hurriedly but a few moments before. Her tottering body, clothed in bear skins, was

bent forward over a large triangular shield of polished brass, on which she leant her lank shrivelled arms. Her head shook with a tremulous palsied action—a leer, half smile, half grimace, distended her withered lips, and lightened her sunken eyes. Sinister, cringing, repulsive; her face, livid with the reflection from the weapon that was her support, and her figure, scarcely human in the rugged garments that encompassed its gaunt proportions, she seemed a deformity set up by evil spirits to mock the majesty of the human form—an embodied satire on all that is most deplorable in infirmity, and most disgusting in age.

The instant she discerned Hermanric, she stretched her body out still further over the shield; and pointing to the interior of the waggon, muttered softly that one fearful and expressive word—dead!

Without waiting for any further explanation, the young Goth mounted the vehicle, and gaining the old woman's side, saw stretched on her collection of herbs—beautiful in the sublime and melancholy

stillness of death—the corpse of Goisvintha's last child.

"Is Hermanric wrath?" whined the hag, quailing before the steady rebuking glance of the young man. "When I said that Brunechild was greater than Hermanric, I lied. It is Hermanric that is most powerful! See, the dressings were placed on the wounds; and, though the child has died, shall not the treasures that were promised me be mine? I have done what I could, but my cunning begins to desert me, for I am old—old—old! I have seen my generation pass away! Aha! I am old, Hermanric, I am old!"

When the young warrior looked on the child, he saw that the hag had spoken truth, and that the victim had died from no fault of hers. Pale and serene, the countenance of the boy showed how tranquil had been his death. The dressings had been skilfully composed and carefully applied to his wounds, but suffering and privation had annihilated the feebleness of human resistance in their march towards the last, dread goal; and the treachery of Imperial Rome had once more

triumphed as was its wont, and triumphed over a child!

As Hermanric descended with the corpse, Goisvintha was the first object that met his eyes when he alighted on the ground. The mother received from him the lifeless burden without an exclamation or a tear. That emanation from her former and kinder self, which had been produced by the closing recital of her sufferings, was henceforth, at the signal of her last child's death, extinguished in her for ever!

"His wounds had crippled him," said the young man, gloomily. "He could never have fought with the warriors! Our ancestors slew themselves when they were no longer vigorous for the fight. It is better that he has died!"

"Vengeance!" gasped Goisvintha, pressing up closely to his side. "We will have vengeance for the massacre of Aquileia! When blood is streaming in the palaces of Rome, remember my murdered children, and hasten not to sheathe thy sword!"

At this instant, as if to rouse still further the

fierce determination that appeared already in the face of the young Goth, the voice of Alaric was heard commanding the army to advance. Hermanric started, and drew the panting woman after him to the resting-place of the king. There, armed at all points, and rising, by his superior stature, high above the throng around him, stood the dreaded captain of the Gothic hosts. His helmet was raised so as to display his clear blue eyes gleaming over the multitude around him; he pointed with his sword in the direction of Italy; and as, rank by rank, the men started to their arms, and prepared exultingly for the march, his lips parted with a smile of triumph, and ere he moved to accompany them he spoke thus:—

"Warriors of the Goths, our halt is a short one among the mountains; but, let not the weary repine, for the glorious resting-place that awaits our labours, is the City of Rome! The curse of Odin, when in the infancy of our nation he retired before the myriads of the Empire, it is our privilege to fulfil! That future destruction, which he denounced against Rome, it is ours to effect!

Remember your hostages, that the Romans have slain; your possessions, that the Romans have seized; your trust, that the Romans have betrayed! Remember, that I, your king, have within me that supernatural impulse which never deceives, and which calls to me in a voice of encouragement—Advance, and the Empire is thine! Assemble the warriors, and the City of the World shall be delivered to the conquering Goths! Let us onward without delay! Our prey awaits us! Our triumph is near! Our vengeance is at hand!"

He paused; and at that moment, the trumpet gave signal for the march.

"Up! Up!" cried Hermanric, seizing Goisvintha by the arm, and pointing to the waggon which had already begun to move; "Make ready for the journey! I will charge myself with the burial of the child. Yet a few days and our encampment may be before Aquileia. Be patient, and I will avenge thee in the palaces of Rome!"

The mighty mass moved. The multitude stretched forth over the barren ground; and, even

now, the warriors in front of the army might be seen by those in the rear mounting the last range of passes that lay between the plains of Italy and the Goths.*

* The historical events introduced up to this point will be found in the 30th chapter of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Alaric's conviction that he was the instrument of a supernatural agency against Rome, is mentioned at the beginning of the 31st chapter. In quoting from Gibbon, here and elsewhere, I refer to the edition of 1844, in one volume.

CHAPTER II.

THE COURT.

The traveller who so far departs from the ordinary track of tourists in modern Italy, as to visit the city of Ravenna, remembers with astonishment, as he treads its silent and melancholy streets, and beholds vineyards and marshes spread over an extent of four miles between the Adriatic and the town, that this place, now half deserted, was once the most populous of Roman fortresses; and that where fields and woods now present themselves to his eyes, the fleets of the Empire once rode securely at anchor, and the merchant of Rome disembarked his precious cargoes at his warehouse door.

As the power of Rome declined, the Adriatic by a strange fatality began to desert the fortress,

whose defence it had hitherto secured. Coeval with the gradual degeneracy of the people, was the gradual withdrawal of the ocean from the city walls; until, at the beginning of the sixth century, a grove of pines already appeared where the port of Augustus once existed.

At the period of our story—though the sea had even then receded perceptibly—the ditches round the walls were yet filled, and the canals still ran through the city, in much the same manner as they intersect Venice at the present time.

On the morning that we are about to describe, the autumn had advanced some days since the events mentioned in the preceding chapter. Although the sun was now high in the eastern horizon, the restlessness produced by the heat emboldened a few idlers of Ravenna to brave the sultriness of the atmosphere, in the vain hope of being greeted by a breeze from the Adriatic, as they mounted the seaward ramparts of the town. On attaining their destined elevation, these sanguine citizens turned their faces with fruitless and despairing industry towards every point of the compass, but

no breath of air came to reward their perseverance. Nothing could be more thoroughly suggestive of the undiminished universality of the heat, than the view, in every direction, from the position they then occupied. The stone houses of the city behind them glowed with a vivid brightness overpowering to the strongest eyes. The light curtains hung motionless over the lonely windows. No shadows varied the brilliant monotony of the walls, or softened the lively glitter on the waters of the fountains beneath. Not a ripple stirred the surface of the broad channel, that now replaced the ancient harbour. Not a breath of wind unfolded the scorching sails of the deserted vessels at the quay. Over the marshes in the distance hung a hot, quivering mist; and in the vineyards, near the town, not a leaf waved upon its slender stem. On the seaward side lay, vast and level, the prospect of the burning sand, and beyond it the main ocean,—waveless, torpid, and suffused in a flood of fierce brightness,—stretched out to the cloudless horizon that closed the sunbright view.

Within the town, in those streets where the tall houses cast a deep shadow on the flagstones of the road, the figures of a few slaves might, here and there, be seen sleeping against the walls, or gossiping languidly on the faults of their respective lords. Sometimes an old beggar might be observed, hunting on the well-stocked preserves of his own body the lively vermin of the South. Sometimes a restless child crawled from a doorstep to paddle in the stagnant waters of a kennel; but with the exception of these doubtful evidences of human industry, the prevailing characteristic of the few groups of the lowest orders of the people which appeared in the streets was the most listless and utter indolence. All that gave splendour to the city at other hours of the day was at this period hidden from the eye. The elegant courtiers reclined in their lofty chambers; the guards on duty ensconced themselves in angles of walls and recesses of porticos; the graceful ladies slumbered on perfumed couches in darkened rooms; the gilded carriages were shut into the coach-houses; the prancing horses were confined in the

stables; and even the wares in the market places were removed from exposure to the sun. It was clear that the luxurious inhabitants of Ravenna recognised no duties of sufficient importance, and no pleasures of sufficient attraction, to necessitate the exposure of their susceptible bodies to the noontide heat.

To give the reader some idea of the manner in which the indolent patricians of the Court loitered away their noon, and to satisfy, at the same time, the exigencies attaching to the conduct of this story, it is requisite to quit the lounging-places of the plebeians in the streets, for the couches of the nobles in the Emperor's palace.

Passing through the massive entrance gates, crossing the vast hall of the Imperial abode, with its statues, its marbles, and its guards in attendance; and thence, ascending the noble staircase, the first object that might on this occasion have attracted the observer, when he gained the approaches to the private apartments, was a door at an extremity of the corridor, richly carved and standing half open. At this spot were grouped

some fifteen or twenty individuals, who conversed by signs, aud maintained in all their movements the most decorous and complete silence. Sometimes, one of the party stole on tiptoe to the door, and looked cautiously through, returning almost instantaneously, and expressing to his next neighbour, by various grimaces, his immense interest in the sight he had just beheld. Occasionally, there came from this mysterious chamber, sounds resembling the cackling of poultry; varied, now and then, by a noise like the falling of a shower of small, light substances upon a hard floor. Whenever these sounds were audible, the members of the party outside the door looked round upon each other and smiled—some sarcastically, some triumphantly. A few among these patient expectants grasped rolls of vellum in their hands; the rest held nosegays of rare flowers, or supported in their arms small statues and pictures in mosaic. Of their number, some were painters and poets; some orators and philosophers; and some statuaries and musicians. Among such a motley assemblage of professions, remarkable in all ages of the

world for fostering in their votaries the vice of irritability, it may seem strange that so quiet and orderly a behaviour should exist as that just described. But it is to be observed that in attending at the palace, these men of genius made sure at least of outward unanimity among their ranks, by coming equally prepared with one accomplishment, and equally animated by one hope: —they waited to employ a common agent— flattery; to attain a common end—gain.

The chamber thus sacred, even from the intrusion of intellectual inspiration, although richly ornamented, was of no remarkable extent. At other times the eye might have wandered with delight on the exquisite plants and flowers, scattered profusely over a noble terrace, to which a second door in the apartment conducted; but, at the present moment, the employment of the occupant of the room was of so extraordinary a nature, that the most attentive observation must have missed all the inferior characteristics of the place, to settle immediately on its inhabitant alone.

In the midst of a large flock of poultry, which

seemed strangely misplaced on a floor of marble and under a gilded roof, stood a pale, thin, debilitated youth, magnificently clothed, and holding in his hand a silver vase filled with grain, which he ever and anon distributed to the cackling multitude at his feet. Nothing could be more pitiably effeminate than the appearance of this young man. His eyes were heavy and vacant; his forehead low and retiring; his cheeks sallow; and his form curved as if with a premature old age. An unmeaning smile dilated his thin, colourless lips; and as he looked down on his strange favourites, he occasionally whispered to them a few broken expressions of endearment, almost infantine in their simplicity. His whole soul seemed to be engrossed by the labour of distributing his grain, and he followed the different movements of the poultry with an earnestness of attention, which seemed almost idiotic in its ridiculous intensity. If it be asked, why a person so contemptible as this solitary youth has been introduced with so much care, and described with so much minuteness, it must be answered, that, though destined to form no

important figure in this work, he played, from his position, a remarkable part in the great drama on which it is founded—for this feeder of chickens was no less a person than Honorius, Emperor of Rome.*

It is the very imbecility of this man, at such a time as that we now write on, which invests his character with a fearful interest in the eye of posterity. To his feebleness was accorded the terrible responsibility of liberating the long-prisoned storm, whose elements we have attempted to describe in the preceding chapter. With just intellect enough to be capricious, and just determination enough to be mischievous, he was an instrument fitted for the uses of every ambitious villain who could succeed in gaining his ear. To flatter his puerile tyranny, the infatuated intriguers of the court rewarded the heroic Stilicho for the rescue of his country, with the penalty of death, and defrauded Alaric of the moderate concessions that they had solemnly pledged themselves to perform.

* Vide "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. 29, page 458.

To gratify his vanity, he was paraded in triumph through the streets of Rome, for a victory that others had gained. To pander to his arrogance, by an exhibition of the vilest privilege of that power which had been entrusted to him for good, the massacre of the helpless hostages, confided by Gothic honour to Roman treachery, was unhesitatingly ordained; and, finally, to soothe the turbulence of his unmanly fears, the last act of his unscrupulous councillors, ere the empire fell, was to authorise his abandoning his people in the hour of peril, careless who suffered in defenceless Rome, while he was secure in fortified Ravenna.* Such was the man under whom the mightiest of the world's structures was doomed to totter to its fall! Raised and supported by a superhuman daring, that invested the nauseous horrors of incessant bloodshed with a rude and appalling magnificence, the mistress of nations was now fated to sink by the most ignoble of defeats, under the most abject of tremblers. For this had the rough old King-

* "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chapters 29 and 30.

dom shaken off its enemies by swarms from its vigorous arms! For this had the doubtful virtues of the Republic, and the perilous magnificence of the Empire, perplexed and astonished the world! In such a conclusion as Honorius, ended the dignified barbarities of a Brutus, the polished splendours of an Augustus, the unearthly atrocities of a Nero, and the immortal virtues of a Trajan! Vainly, through the toiling ages, over the ruin of her noblest hearts, and the prostitution of her grandest intellects, had Rome stridden pitilessly onward, grasping at the shadow—Glory; the fiat had now gone forth, that doomed her to possess herself finally, of the substance—Shame!

When the imperial trifler had exhausted his store of grain, and satisfied the cravings of his voracious favourites, he was relieved of his silver vase by two attendants. The flock of poultry was then ushered out at one door, while the flock of geniuses was ushered in at the other.

Leaving the Emperor to cast his languid eyes over objects of art for which he had no admiration, and to open his unwilling ears to panegyrical

orations for which he had no comprehension, we proceed to introduce the reader to an apartment on the opposite side of the palace, in which are congregated all the beauty and elegance of his Court.

Imagine a room, two hundred feet long and proportionably broad. Its floor is mosaic, wrought into the loveliest patterns. Its sides are decorated with immense pillars of variegated marble, the recesses formed by which are occupied by statues, all arranged in exquisite variety of attitude, so as to appear to be offering to whoever approaches them, the rare flowers which it is the duty of the attendants to place in their hands. The ceiling is painted in fresco, in patterns and colours harmonising with those on the mosaic floor. The cornices are of silver, and decorated with mottoes from the amatory poets of the day, the letters of which are formed by precious stones. In the middle of the room is a fountain throwing up streams of perfumed water, and surrounded by golden aviaries, containing birds of all sizes and nations. Three large windows, placed at the eastern extremity of

the apartment, look out upon the Adriatic, but are covered at this hour, from the outside, with silk curtains of a delicate green shade, which cast a soft, luxurious light over every object, but are so thinly woven and so skilfully arranged, that the slightest breath of air which moves without, finds its way immediately to the languid occupants of the court waiting-room. The number of these individuals amounts to about fifty or sixty persons. By far the larger half of the assemblage are women. Their black hair tastefully braided into various forms, and adorned with flowers or precious stones, contrasts elegantly with the brilliant whiteness of the robes, in which they are for the most part clothed. Some of them are occupied in listlessly watching the movements of the birds in the aviaries; others hold a languid and whispered conversation with such of the courtiers as happen to be placed near them. The men exhibit in their dresses a greater variety of colour, and in their occupations a greater fertility of resource than the women. Their garments, of the lightest rose, violet, or yellow tints, diversify fantastically the

monotonous white robes of their gentle companions. Of their employments, the most conspicuous are, playing on the lute, gaming with dice, teasing their lap-dogs, and insulting their parasites. Whatever their occupation, it is performed with little attention, and less enthusiasm. Some recline on their couches with closed eyes, as if the heat made the labour of using their organs of vision too much for them; others, in the midst of a conversation, suddenly leave a sentence unfinished, apparently incapacitated by lassitude from giving expression to the simplest ideas. Every sight in the apartment that attracts the eye, every sound that gains the ear, expresses a luxurious repose. No brilliant light mars the pervading softness of the atmosphere; no violent colour materialises the light, etherial hues of the dresses; no sudden noises interrupt the fitful and plaintive notes of the lute, jar with the soft twittering of the birds in the aviaries, or drown the still, regular melody of the ladies' voices. All objects, animate and inanimate, are in harmony with each other. It is a scene of spiritualised indolence — a picture of dreamy

beatitude, in the inmost sanctuary of unruffled repose.

Amid this assemblage of beauty and nobility, the members of which were rather to be generally noticed than particularly observed, there was, however, one individual who, both by the solitary occupation he had chosen and his accidental position in the room, was personally remarkable among the listless patricians around him.

His couch was placed nearer the window than that of any other occupant of the chamber. Some of his indolent neighbours—especially those of the gentler sex—occasionally regarded him with mingled looks of admiration and curiosity; but no one approached him, or attempted to engage him in conversation. A piece of vellum lay by his side, on which, from time to time, he traced a few words, and then resumed his reclining position, apparently absorbed in reflexion and utterly regardless of all the occupants—male and female—of the imperial apartment. Judging from his general appearance, he could scarcely be twenty-five years of age. The conformation of the upper

part of his face was thoroughly intellectual—the forehead high, broad, and upright; the eyes clear, penetrating, and thoughtful—but the lower part was, on the other hand, undeniably sensual. The lips full and thick, formed a disagreeable contrast to the delicate chiselling of the straight Grecian nose; while the fleshiness of the chin, and the jovial redundancy of the cheeks, were, in their turn, utterly at variance with the character of the pale noble forehead, and the expression of the quick intelligent eyes. In stature, he was barely of the middle size; but every part of his body was so perfectly proportioned, that he appeared, in any position, taller than he really was. The upper part of his dress, thrown open from the heat, partly disclosed the fine statuesque formation of his neck and chest. His ears, hands, and feet, were of that smallness and delicacy which is held to denote the aristocracy of birth; and there was in his manner, that indescribable combination of unobtrusive dignity and unaffected elegance, which in all ages and countries, and through all changes of manners and customs, has

rendered the demeanour of its few favoured possessors, the instantaneous interpreter of their social rank.

While the patrician was still occupied over his vellum, the following conversation took place in whispers, between two ladies placed near the situation he occupied.

"Tell me, Camilla," said the eldest and stateliest of the two, "who is the courtier so occupied in composition? I have endeavoured, I know not how often, to catch his eye; but the man will look at nothing but his roll of vellum, or the corners of the room."

"What, are you so great a stranger in Italy as not to know him!" replied the other, a lively girl of small delicate form, who fidgeted with persevering restlessness on her couch, and seemed incapable of giving an instant's steady attention to any of the objects around her. "By all the saints, martyrs, and relics of my uncle, the bishop!"—

"Hush! You should not swear!"

"Not swear! Why I am making a new col-

lection of oaths, intended solely for ladies' use! I intend to set the fashion of swearing by them myself!"

"But answer my question, I beseech you! Will you never learn to talk on one subject at a time?"

"Your question—ah, your question!—It was about the Goths?"

"No, no! It was about that man who is incessantly writing, and will look at nobody. He is almost as provoking as Camilla herself!"

"Don't frown so! That man, as you call him, is the senator Vetranio."

The lady started. It was evident that Vetranio had a reputation.

"Yes!" continued the lively Camilla. "That is the accomplished Vetranio, but he will be no favourite of yours, for he sometimes swears—swears by the ancient gods too, which is forbidden!"

"He is handsome."

"Handsome! he is beautiful! Not a woman in Italy but is languishing for him!"

"I have heard that he is clever."

"Who has not? He is the author of some of the most celebrated sauces of the age. Cooks of all nations worship him as an oracle. Then he writes poetry, and composes music, and paints pictures! And, as for philosophy—he talks it better than my uncle the bishop!"

"Is he rich?"

"Ah! my uncle the bishop!—I must tell you how I helped Vetranio to make a satire on him! When I was staying with him at Rome, I used often to see a woman in a veil taken across the garden to his study; so, to perplex him, I asked him who she was. And he frowned and stammered, and said, at first, that I was disrespectful; but he told me, afterwards, that she was an Arian whom he was labouring to convert. So I thought I should like to see how this conversion went on, and I hid myself behind a bookcase. But it is a profound secret; I tell it you in confidence."

"I don't care to know it. Tell me about Vetranio."

"How ill-natured you are! Oh, I shall never

forget how we laughed, when I told Vetranio what I had seen! He took up his writing-materials, and made the satire immediately. The next day all Rome heard of it. My uncle was speechless with rage! I believe he suspected me; but he gave up converting the Arian lady; and—"

"I ask you again—is Vetranio rich?"

"Half Sicily is his. He has immense estates in Africa, olive-grounds in Syria, and corn-fields in Gaul. I was present at an entertainment he gave at his villa in Sicily. He fitted up one of his vessels from the descriptions of the furnishing of Cleopatra's galley, and made his slaves swim after us, as attendant Tritons. Oh, it was magnificent!"

"I should like to know him."

"You should see his cats! He has a perfect legion of them at his villa. Twelve slaves are employed to attend on them. He is mad about cats, and declares that the old Egyptians were right to worship them. He told me, yesterday, that when his largest cat is dead, he will canonize her, in spite of the Christians! And then, he is so kind

to his slaves! They are never whipped, or punished; except when they neglect or disfigure themselves; for Vetranio will allow nothing that is ugly or dirty to come near him. You must visit his banquetting hall, at Rome: it is perfection!"

"But why is he here?"

"He has come to Ravenna, charged with some secret message from the Senate, and has presented a rare breed of chickens to that foolish—"

"Hush! you may be overheard!"

"Well!—to that *wise* Emperor of ours! Ah, the palace has been so pleasant since he has been here!"

At this instant, the above dialogue—from the frivolity of which the universally-learned readers of modern times will, we fear, recoil with contempt—was interrupted by a movement on the part of its hero, which showed that his occupation was at an end. With the elaborate deliberation of a man who disdains to exhibit himself as liable to be hurried by any mortal affair, Vetranio slowly folded up the vellum he had now filled with

writing; and, depositing it in his bosom, made a sign to a slave, who happened to be then passing near him with a dish of fruit.

Having received his message, the slave retired to the entrance of the apartment; and, beckoning to a man who stood outside the door, motioned him to approach Vetranio's couch.

This individual immediately hurried across the room, to the window where the elegant Roman awaited him. Not the slightest description of him is needed; for he belonged to a class with which moderns are as well acquainted as ancients —a class which has survived all changes of nations and manners—a class which came in with the first rich man in the world, and will only go out with the last. In a word, he was a Parasite.

He enjoyed, however, one great superiority over his modern successors. In his day, flattery was a *profession*—in ours, it has sunk to a *pursuit*.

"I shall leave Ravenna this evening," said Vetranio.

The parasite made three low bows and smiled ecstatically.

"You will order my travelling equipage to be at the palace gates an hour before sunset."

The parasite declared he should never forget the honour of the commission, and left the room.

The sprightly Camilla, who had overheard Vetranio's command, jumped off her couch, as soon as the parasite's back was turned, and, running up to the senator, began to reproach him for the determination he had just formed.

"Have you no compunction at leaving me to the dulness of this horrible palace, to satisfy your idle fancy for going to Rome," said she, pouting her pretty lip, and playing with a lock of the dark brown hair that clustered over Vetranio's brow.

"Has the senator Vetranio so little regard for his friends, as to leave them to the mercy of the Goths?" said another lady, advancing with a winning smile to Camilla's side.

"Ah, those Goths!" exclaimed Vetranio, turning to the last speaker, "Tell me, Julia, is it not reported that the barbarians are really marching into Italy?"

"Everybody has heard of it. The Emperor is

so discomposed by the rumour, that he has forbidden the very name of the Goths to be mentioned in his presence again."

"For my part," continued Vetranio, drawing Camilla towards him, and playfully tapping her little dimpled hand, "I am in anxious expectation of the Goths, for I have designed a statue of Minerva, for which I can find no model so fit as a woman of that troublesome nation. I am informed upon good authority, that their limbs are colossal, and their sense of propriety most obediently pliable under the discipline of the purse."

"If the Goths supply you with a model for anything," said a courtier who had joined the group, while Vetranio was speaking, "it will be with a representation of the burning of your palace at Rome, which they will enable you to paint in blood, from the inexhaustible reservoir of your own wounds."

The individual who uttered this last observation, was remarkable among the brilliant circle around him, by his excessive ugliness. Urged by his personal disadvantages, and the loss of all his property

at the gaming-table, he had latterly personated a character, the accomplishments attached to which, rescued him by their disagreeable originality in that frivolous age, from oblivion or contempt. He was a Cynic philosopher.

His remark, however, produced no other effect on his hearers' serenity, than to excite their merriment. Vetranio laughed, Camilla laughed, Julia laughed. The idea of a troop of barbarians ever being able to burn a palace at Rome, was too wildly ridiculous for any one's gravity; and as the speech was repeated in other parts of the room, in spite of their dulness and lassitude the whole Court laughed.

"I know not why I should be amused at that man's nonsense," said Camilla, suddenly becoming grave, at the very crisis of a most attractive smile, "when I am so melancholy at the thought of Vetranio's departure. What will become of me when he is gone? Alas! who will be left in the palace to compose songs to my beauty and music for my lute? Who will paint me as Venus, and tell me stories about the ancient Egyptians and

their cats? Who at the banquet will direct what dishes I am to choose, and what I am to reject? Who?"—and poor little Camilla stopped suddenly in her enumeration of the pleasures she was about to lose, and seemed on the point of weeping as piteously as she had been laughing rapturously but the instant before.

Vetranio was touched—not by the compliment to his more intellectual powers, but by the admission of his convivial supremacy, as a guide to the banquet, contained in the latter part of Camilla's remonstrance. The sex were then, as now, culpably deficient in gastronomic enthusiasm. It was, therefore, a perfect triumph, to have made a convert to the science, of the youngest and loveliest of the ladies of the Court.

"If she can gain leave of absence," said the gratified senator, "Camilla shall accompany me to Rome, and shall be present at the first celebration of my recent discovery of a Nightingale Sauce."

Camilla was in ecstacies. She seized Vetranio's cheeks between her rosy little fingers, kissed him

as enthusiastically as a child kisses a new toy, and darted gaily off to prepare for her departure.

"Vetranio would be better employed," sneered the Cynic, "in inventing new salves for future wounds, than new sauces for future nightingales! His carcase will be carved by Gothic swords as a feast for the worms, before his birds are spitted with Roman skewers as a feast for his guests! Is this a time for cutting statues and concocting sauces? Fie on the senators who abandon themselves to such pursuits as Vetranio's!"

"I have other designs," replied the object of all this moral indignation, looking with insulting indifference on the Cynic's repulsive countenance, "which, from their immense importance to the world, must meet with universal approval. The labour that I have just achieved forms one of a series of three projects, which I have for some time held in contemplation. The first is an analysis of the new priesthood; the second a true personification, both by painting and sculpture, of Venus; the third a discovery of what has been hitherto uninvented—a nightingale sauce. By the inscru-

table wisdom of Fate, it has been so willed that the last of the objects I proposed to myself has been the first attained. The sauce is composed, and I have just concluded on this vellum the ode that is to introduce it at my table. The analysation will be my next labour. It will take the form of a treatise, in which, making the experience of past years the groundwork of prophecy for the future, I shall show the precise number of additional dissensions, controversies, and quarrels that will be required to enable the new priesthood to be themselves the destroyers of their own worship. I shall ascertain by an exact computation the year in which this destruction will be consummated; and I have by me as the materials for my work an historical summary of Christian schisms and disputes in Rome for the last hundred years. As for my second design, the personification of Venus, it is of appalling difficulty. It demands an investigation of the women of every nation under the sun; a comparison of the relative excellencies and peculiarities of their several charms; and a combination of all that is loveliest in the infinite

variety of their most prominent attractions under one form. To forward the execution of this arduous project, my tenants at home and my slave-merchants abroad have orders to send to my villa in Sicily all women who are born most beautiful in the Empire, or can be brought most beautiful from the nations around. At the fitting period I shall commence my investigations, undismayed by difficulty and determined on success. Never yet has the true Venus been personified! Should I accomplish the task, how exquisite will be my triumph! My work will be the altar at which thousands will offer up the sofest emotions of the heart. It will free the prisoned imagination of youth, and freshen the fading recollections on the memory of age!" *

Vetranio paused. The Cynic was struck dumb with indignation. A solitary zealot for the Church, who happened to be by, frowned at the analysation. The ladies tittered at the personification. The gastronomists chuckled at the nightingale

* For the habits and pursuits of the Roman nobles, see "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. 31, page 480.

sauce; but for the first few minutes no one spoke. During this temporary embarrassment, Vetranio whispered a few words in Julia's ear; and—just as the Cynic was sufficiently recovered to retort—accompanied by the lady, he quitted the room.

At most periods of the world, modern or ancient, the historical student will perceive the existence of a certain class of men, one great object of whose creation appears to have been to supply posterity with the most striking and complete examples of the influence of the age on the individual. Of such an order was the senator Vetranio. Under the flimsy superstructure of this man's laborious trifling and elaborate profligacy, lay concealed a powerful and profound intellect, the legitimate cravings of which—unanswered in those degenerate times—were either destroyed by privation, or deceived into a relish for the intellectual garbage of the age. Rather reflective than active; rather imitative than creative; too pliable for resistance, and too social for solitude: his was not the understanding which, out of itself, can supply its own wants,—which asks from the world without neither

inspiration nor sympathy, and which glories in its sublime loneliness, amid the wilderness inherited by its own ungenial aspirations, or created by its own unwelcome achievements. Like an inland sea, his mind lay calm in itself, among those external influences that alone could rouse it to action, or lash it into grandeur. But the storm of mighty actions, or great examples, at that worthless period, never impelled it to cast up its hidden treasures to the day, never agitated it to its inmost depths. Over its indolent surface there passed but the little breeze of luxury, or there rose but the puny wavelet of accomplishments. And thus, intellectually crippled beneath the degenerate influences of his age, this man, who in other times might have led the destinies of an empire, found, in his own, no brighter distinction than the rule over jesters, and no nobler ambition than the supremacy among cooks.

Never was popularity more unalloyed than Vetranio's. Gifted with a disposition, the pliability of which adapted itself to all emergencies, his generosity disarmed enemies, while his affability

made friends. Munificent without assumption, successful without pride, he obliged with grace, and shone with safety. People enjoyed his hospitality, for they knew that it was disinterested; and admired his acquirements, for they felt that they were unobtrusive. Sometimes (as in his dialogue with the Cynic) the whim of the moment, or the sting of a sarcasm, drew from him a hint at his station, or a display of his eccentricities; but as he was always the first soon afterwards to lead the laugh at his own outbreak, his credit as a noble suffered nothing by his infirmity as a man. Gaily and attractively he moved in all grades of the society of his age, winning his social laurels in every rank, without making a rival to dispute their possession, or an enemy to detract from their value.

And yet the enchanting affability, the prodigal generosity, which made him this enviable position in the world, was a necessity, rather than a virtue, in such a character as his. He was kind to his inferiors, more because he hated the contact of suffering, and the contamination of discontent,

than because he desired to be beloved, or delighted to be benevolent. He was devoted to his own class, because quarrels jarred with his disposition, and rivalries disturbed the luxurious serenity which indulgence had made a second nature to his feelings. Powerful by station, and unlimited in resources, that exemption from troubles and anxieties which most men hope for as a boon, he employed every effort to pursue as a system. In others, such an extended selfishness would have constantly betrayed itself; but, hallowed by wealth, and veiled by ingenuity, it assumed in him the form of philosophy; and the senator was quoted as an elegant Epicurean, where the plebeian would have been branded as a heartless egotist.

On quitting the court waiting-room, Vetranio and Julia descended the palace stairs, and passed into the Emperor's garden. Used generally as an evening lounge, this place was now untenanted, save by the few attendants engaged in cultivating the flower beds, and watering the smooth, shady lawns. Entering one of the most retired of the numerous summer-houses among the trees,

Vetranio motioned his companion to a seat; and then abruptly addressed her in the following words:—

"I have heard that you are about to depart for Rome—Is it true!"

He asked this question in a low voice, and with a manner in its earnestness strangely at variance with the volatile gaiety which had characterised him, but a few moments before, among the nobles of the court. As Julia answered him in the affirmative, his countenance expressed a lively satisfaction; and, seating himself by her side, he continued the conversation thus:—

"If I thought that you intended to stay for any length of time in the city, I should venture upon a fresh extortion from your friendship, by asking you to lend me your little villa at Aricia!"

"You shall take with you to Rome an order on my steward to place everything there at your entire disposal."

"My generous Julia! You are of the gifted few who really know how to confer a favour! Another woman would have asked me why I wanted

the villa—you give it unreservedly. So delicate an unwillingness to intrude on a secret, reminds me that the secret should now be yours!"

To explain the easy confidence that existed between Vetranio and Julia, it is necessary to inform the reader that the lady—although still attractive in appearance—was of an age to muse on her past, rather than to meditate on her future conquests. She had known her eccentric companion from his boyhood, had been once flattered in his verses, and was sensible enough—now that her charms were on the wane—to be as content with the friendship of the senator, as she had formerly been enraptured with the adoration of the youth.

"You are too penetrating"—resumed Vetranio after a short pause—"not to have already suspected that I only require your villa to assist me in the concealment of an intrigue. So peculiar is my adventure in its different circumstances, that to make use of my palace as the scene of its development, would be to risk a discovery which might produce the immediate subversion of all my

designs. But I fear the length of my confession will exceed the duration of your patience !"

" You have aroused my curiosity. I could listen to you for ever !"

" A short time before I took my departure from Rome for this place," continued Vetranio, " I encountered an adventure of the most extraordinary nature, which has haunted me with the most extraordinary perseverance, and which will have, I feel assured, the most extraordinary results. I was sitting one evening in the garden of my palace on the Pincian Mount, occupied in trying a new composition on my lute. In one of the pauses of the melody, which was tender and plaintive, I heard sounds that resembled the sobbing of some one in distress among the trees behind me. I looked cautiously round, and discerned half hidden by the verdure, the figure of a young girl, who appeared to be listening to the music with the most entranced attention. Flattered by such a testimony to my skill, and anxious to gain a nearer view of my mysterious visitant, I advanced towards her hiding-place, forgetting in

my haste to continue playing on the lute. The instant the music ceased, she discerned me and disappeared. Determined to behold her, I again struck the chords, and in a few minutes I saw her white robe once more among the trees. I redoubled my efforts,—I played with the utmost expression the most pathetic parts of the melody. As if under the influence of a charm, she began to advance towards me, now hesitating, now moving back a few steps, now approaching, half reluctantly half willingly, until utterly vanquished by the long trembling close of the last cadence of the air, she ran suddenly up to me, and falling at my feet, raised her hands as if to implore my pardon.

"I never saw anything so enchanting as she was in that position. Her large soft eyes, bright with tears, looked piteously up in my face, her delicate lips trembled as if she wished to speak, but dared not, her smooth round arms were the very perfection of beauty. Child as she seemed in years and emotions, she looked a woman in loveliness and form. For the moment, I was too much astonished by the suddenness of her supplicating

action to move or speak. As soon as I recovered myself, I attempted to fondle and console her, but she shrunk from my embrace, and seemed inclined to escape from me again, until I touched once more the strings of the lute, and then she uttered a subdued exclamation of delight, nestled close up to me, and looked into my face with such a strange expression of mingled adoration and rapture, that I declare to you, Julia, I felt as bashful before her as a boy.

"The lute was my sole means of procuring any communication with her. If I ceased playing, we were as strangers; if I resumed, we were as friends. So, subduing the notes of the instrument, while she spoke to me in a soft tremulous musical voice, I still continued to play. By this plan I discovered at our first interview, that she was the daughter of one Numerian, that she was on the point of completing her fourteenth year, and that she was called Antonina. I had only succeeded in gaining this mere outline of her story, when, as if struck by some sudden apprehension, she tore herself from me with a look of the utmost terror,

and entreating me not to follow her if I ever desired to see her again, she disappeared rapidly among the trees.

"The next evening, I revisited the garden-grove; and, as soon as I struck the chords, as if by magic, she again approached. At this second interview I learned the reason of her mysterious appearances and departures. Her father, she told me, was one of a new sect, who imagine—with what reason it is impossible to comprehend—that they recommend themselves to their Deity, by making their lives one perpetual round of bodily suffering and mental anguish. Not content with distorting all his own feelings and faculties, this tyrant perpetrated his insane austerities upon the poor child as well. He forbade her to enter a theatre, to look on sculpture, to read poetry, to listen to music. He made her learn long prayers, and attend to interminable sermons. He allowed her no companions of her own age—not even girls like herself. The only recreation that she could obtain, was the permission—granted with much reluctance and many rebukes—to cultivate a little

garden which belonged to the house they lived in, and joined at one point the groves round my palace. There, while she was engaged over her flowers, she first heard the sound of my lute. For many months before I had discovered her, she had been in the habit of climbing the inclosure that bounded her garden, and hiding herself among the trees to listen to the music, whenever her father's concerns took him abroad. She had been discovered in this occupation by an old man appointed to watch her in his master's absence. The attendant, however, on hearing her confession, not only promised to keep her secret, but permitted her to continue her visits to my grove whenever I chanced to be playing there on the lute. Now the most mysterious part of this matter is, that the girl seemed—in spite of his severity towards her—to have a great affection for her surly parent; for, when I offered to deliver her from his custody, she declared that nothing could induce her to desert him; not even the attraction of living among fine pictures and hearing beautiful music every hour in the day. But, I see I weary you; and indeed, it

is evident from the length of the shadows, that the hour of my departure is at hand. Let me then pass from my introductory interviews with Antonina, to the consequences that had resulted from them when I set forth on my journey to Ravenna.

"You will easily imagine, Julia, that the strangeness of this girl's situation, and the originality of her ideas, invested her with an attraction for me, which the charms of her person and age contributed immensely to heighten. She delighted my faculties as a poet, as much as she fired my feelings as a man; and I determined to lure her from the tyrannical protection of her father, by the employment of every artifice that my ingenuity could suggest. I began by teaching her to exercise for herself the talent which had so attracted her in another. By the familiarity engendered on both sides by such an occupation, I hoped to gain as much in affection from her as she acquired in skill from me, but, to my astonishment, I still found her as indifferent towards the master and as tender towards the music, as she had appeared at our first interview. If she had repelled my

advances, if they had overwhelmed her with confusion, I could have adapted myself to her humour, I should have felt the encouragement of hope; but the coldness, the carelessness, the unnatural, incomprehensible ease with which she received even my caresses, utterly disconcerted me. It seemed as if she could only regard me as a moving statue, as a mere impersonation, immaterial as the science I was teaching her. If I spoke, she hardly looked on me; if I moved, she scarcely noticed the action. I could not consider it dislike, she seemed too gentle to nourish such a feeling for any creature on earth. I could not believe it coldness, she was all life, all agitation, if she heard only a few notes of music. When she touched the chords of the instrument, her whole frame trembled. Her eyes, mild, serious, and thoughtful when she looked on *me*, now brightened with delight, now softened with tears, when she listened to the lute. As day by day, her skill in music increased, so her manner towards me grew more inexplicably indifferent. At length, weary of the constant disappointments that I experienced, and determined to make a last

effort to touch her heart, by awakening her gratitude, I presented her with the very lute which she had at first heard, and on which she had now learned to play. Never have I seen any human being so rapturously delighted as this incomprehensible girl, when she received the instrument from my hands. She alternately wept and laughed over it, she kissed it, fondled it, spoke to it, as if it had been a living thing. But when I approached to suppress the expressions of thankfulness that she poured on me for the gift, she suddenly hid the lute in her robe, as if afraid that I should deprive her of it, and hurried rapidly from my sight. The next day I waited for her at our accustomed meeting-place, but she never appeared. I sent a slave disguised to her father's house, but she would hold no communication with him. It was evident, that now she had gained her end, she cared no more to behold me. In my first moments of irritation, I determined to make her feel my power, if she despised my kindness; but reflection convinced me, from my acquaintance with her character, that in such a matter force was impolitic, that I should

risk my popularity in Rome, and engage myself in an unworthy quarrel to no purpose. Dissatisfied with myself, and disappointed in the girl, I obeyed the first dictates of my impatience, and seizing the opportunity afforded by my duties in the senate of escaping from the scene of my defeated hopes, I departed angrily for Ravenna.

"You smile, Julia, but hear me to the end and you will find that I have not yet resigned myself to defeat. For the few days that I have remained here, Antonina's image has incessantly troubled my thoughts. I perceive that my inclination as well as my reputation, is concerned in subduing her ungrateful aversion. I suspect that my anxiety to gain her, will, if unremoved, so far influence my character, that from Vetranio the Serene, I shall be changed into Vetranio the Sardonic. Pride, honour, curiosity, and love, all urge me to her conquest. To prepare for my banquet is an excuse to the Court for my sudden departure from this place; the real object of my journey is Antonina alone.

"You will ask me how I purpose to obtain

another interview with her? I answer, that the girl's attendant has voluntarily offered himself as an instrument for the prosecution of my plans. The very day before I departed from Rome he suddenly presented himself to me, in my garden, and proposed to introduce me into Numerian's house—having first demanded, with the air more of an equal than an inferior, whether the report that I was still a secret adherent of the old religion, of the worship of the gods, was true. Suspicious of the fellow's motives (for he abjured all recompense as the reward of his treachery), and irritated by the girl's recent ingratitude, I treated his offer with contempt. Now, however, that my dissatisfaction is calmed, and my anxiety aroused, I am determined, at all hazards, to trust myself to this man, be his motives for aiding me what they may. If my efforts at my expected interview—and I will not spare them—are rewarded with success, it will be necessary to obtain some refuge for Antonina, that will neither be suspected nor searched. For such a hiding-place, nothing can be more admirably adapted than your Arician villa. Do you—now

that you know for what use it is intended—repent of your generous disposal of it in aid of my design?"

"I am delighted to have had it to bestow on you. Your adventure is indeed uncommon—I burn with impatience to hear how it will end. Whatever happens, you may depend on my secresy, and count on my assistance. But see, the sun is already verging towards the west; and yonder comes one of your slaves to inform you, I doubt not, that your equipage is prepared. Return with me to the palace, and I will supply you with the letter necessary to introduce you as master to my country abode."

* * * * * *

The worthy citizens of Ravenna assembled in the square before the palace, to behold the senator's departure, had entirely exhausted such innocent materials for amusement, as consisted in staring at the guards, catching the clouds of gnats that hovered about their ears, and quarrelling with each other; and were now reduced to a state of very noisy and unanimous impatience, when their discontent was suddenly and most effectually

appeased by the appearance of the travelling equipage, with Vetranio and Camilla, outside the palace gates.

Uproarious shouts greeted the appearance of the senator and his magnificent retinue; but they were increased a hundred-fold, when the chief slaves, by their master's command, each scattered a handful of small coin among the poorer classes of the spectators. Every man among that heterogeneous assemblage of rogues, fools, and idlers, roared his loudest and capered his highest, in honour of the generous patrician. Gradually and carefully the illustrious travellers moved through the crowd around them to the city gate. And thence, amid incessant shouts of applause, raised with imposing unanimity of lung, and wrought up to the most distracting discordancy of noise, Vetranio and his lively companion departed in triumph for Rome.

* * * * *

A few days after this event, the citizens were again assembled at the same place and hour—probably to witness another patrician departure, when their ears were assailed by the unexpected sound,

produced by the call to arms, which was followed immediately by the closing of the city gates. They had scarcely asked each other the meaning of these unusual occurrences, when a peasant, half frantic with terror, rushed into the square, shouting out the terrible intelligence that the Goths were in sight!

The courtiers heard the news, and starting from a luxurious repast, hurried to the palace windows to behold the portentous spectacle. For the remainder of the evening the banquetting tables were unapproached by the guests.

The wretched Emperor was surprised among his poultry by that dreaded intelligence. He, too, hastened to the windows; and, looking forth, saw the army of avengers passing in contempt his solitary fortress, and moving swiftly onward towards defenceless Rome. Long after the darkness had hidden the masses of that mighty multitude from his eyes, did he remain staring helplessly upon the fading landscape, in a stupor of astonishment and dread; and, for the first time since he had possessed them, his flock of fowls were left for that night untended by their master's hand.

BOOK SECOND.

—— " Res hominum tanta caligine volvi
Adspicerem, lætosque diu florere nocentes
Vexarique pios : rursus labefacta cadebat
Relligio "——

Claudian.

—— " The lot of human kind I found
Involved in mazy darkness, spread around ;
Crime revelling in joy and plenteous store,
While suff'ring Virtue dire distresses bore :
Religion, weakened, lost again her sway "——

Translation by Hawkins.

CHAPTER I.

ROME.

The perusal of the title to this chapter will we fear excite emotions of apprehension, rather than of curiosity, in the breasts of experienced readers. They will doubtless imagine that it is portentous of long rhapsodies on those wonders of antiquity, the description of which has long since become absolutely nauseous to them by incessant iteration. They will foresee wailings over the Palace of the Cæsars, and meditations among the arches of the Colosseum, loading a long series of weary paragraphs to the very chapter's end; and, considerately anxious to spare their attention a task from which it recoils, they will unanimously hurry past the dreaded desert of conventional reflection, to alight on the first oasis that may present itself,

whether it be formed by a new division of the story, or suddenly indicated by the appearance of a dialogue. Animated, therefore, by apprehensions such as these, we hasten to assure them, that in no instance will the localities of our story trench upon the limits of the well-worn Forum, or mount the arches of the exhausted Colosseum. It is with the beings, and not the buildings of old Rome, that their attention is to be occupied. We desire to present them with a picture of the inmost emotions of the times,—of the living, breathing, actions and passions of the people of the doomed Empire. Antiquarian topography and classical architecture we leave to abler pens, and resign to other readers.

It is, however, necessary that the sphere in which the personages of our story are about to act, should be in some measure indicated, in order to facilitate the comprehension of their respective movements. That portion of the extinct city which we design to revive has left few traces of its existence in the modern town. Its sites are traditionary—its buildings are dust. The church rises

where the temple once stood; and the wine-shop now lures the passing idler, where the bath invited his ancestor of old.

The walls of Rome are in extent, at the present day, the same as they were at the period of which we now write. But here, all analogy between the ancient and modern city ends. The houses that these walls were once scarcely wide enough to inclose, have long since vanished, and their modern successors occupy but a third of the space once allotted to the capital of the Empire.

Beyond the walls, immense suburbs stretched forth in the days of old. Gorgeous villas, luxurious groves, temples, theatres, baths—interspersed by colonies of dwellings belonging to the lower orders of the people—surrounded the mighty city. Of these innumerable abodes, hardly a trace remains. The modern traveller, as he looks forth over the site of the famous suburbs, beholds, here and there, a ruined aqueduct, or a crumbling tomb, tottering on the surface of a pestilential marsh.

The present entrance to Rome by the Porta

del Popolo, occupies the same site as the ancient Flaminian Gate. Three great streets now lead from it towards the southern extremity of the city, and form with their tributaries the principal portion of modern Rome. On one side they are bounded by the Pincian Hill, on the other by the Tiber. Of these streets, those nearest the river occupy the position of the famous Campus Martius, those on the other side the ancient approaches to the gardens of Sallust and Lucullus, on the Pincian Mount.

On the opposite bank of the Tiber (gained by the Ponte St. Angelo, formerly the Pons Elius), two streets pierced through an irregular and populous neighbourhood, conduct to the modern Church of St. Peter. At the period of our story this part of the city was of much greater consequence, both in size and appearance than it is at present, and led directly to the ancient Basilica of St. Peter, which stood on the same site as that now occupied by the modern edifice.

The events about to be narrated, occur entirely in the parts of the city just described. From the

Pincian Hill, across the Campus Martius, over the Pons Elius, and on to the Basilica of St. Peter, the reader may be often invited to accompany us, but he will be spared all necessity of penetrating familiar ruins, or mourning over the sepulchres of departed patriots.

Ere, however, we revert to former actors, or proceed to new characters, it will be requisite to people the streets that we here attempt to revive. By this process, it is hoped that the reader will gain that familiarity with the manners and customs of the Romans of the fifth century, on which the influence of this story mainly depends, and which we despair of being able to instil by a philosophical disquisition on the features of the age. A few pages of illustration will serve our purpose better, perhaps, than volumes of historical description. There is no more unerring index to the character of a people, than the streets of their cities.

It is near evening. In the widest part of the Campus Martius crowds of people are assembled before the gates of a palace. They are congregated to receive several baskets of provisions,

distributed with ostentatious charity by the owner of the mansion. The incessant clamour and agitation of the impatient multitude, form a strange contrast to the stately serenity of the natural and artificial objects by which they are inclosed on all sides.

The space they occupy is oblong in shape and of great extent in size. Part of it is formed by a turf walk shaded with trees, part by the paved approaches to the palace and the public baths which stand in its immediate neighbourhood. These two edifices are remarkable by their magnificent outward adornments of statues, and the elegance and number of the flights of steps, by which they are respectively entered. With the inferior buildings, the market-places and the gardens attached to them, they are sufficiently extensive to form the boundary of one side of the immediate view. The appearance of monotony which might at other times be remarked in the vastness and regularity of their white fronts, is, at this moment, agreeably broken by several gaily-coloured awnings, stretched over their doors and

balconies. The sun is now shining on them with overpowering brightness; the metallic ornaments on their windows glitter like gems of fire; even the trees which form their groves, partake of the universal flow of light, and fail like the objects around them to offer to the weary eye either refreshment or repose.

Towards the north, the Mausoleum of Augustus, towering proudly up into the brilliant sky, at once attracts the attention. From its position, parts of this noble building are already in shade. Not a human being is visible on any part of its mighty galleries—it stands solitary and sublime, an impressive embodiment of the emotions which it was raised to represent.

On the side opposite the Palace and the Baths is the turf walk already mentioned. Trees, thickly planted and interlaced by vines, cast a luxurious shade over this spot. In their interstices, viewed from a distance, appear glimpses of gay dresses, groups of figures in repose, stands loaded with fruit and flowers, and innumerable white marble statues of fawns and wood-nymphs. From this

delicious retreat the rippling of fountains is to be heard, occasionally interrupted by the rustling of leaves, or the plaintive cadences of the Roman flute.

Southward, two Pagan temples stand in lonely grandeur among a host of monuments and trophies. Although the laws now forbid the worship for which they were built, the hand of reform has as yet not ventured to doom them to ruin, or adapt them to Christian purposes. None venture to tread their once crowded colonnades. No priest appears to give the oracles from their doors—no sacrifices reek upon their naked altars. Under their roofs, visited only by the light that steals through their narrow entrances, stand unnoticed, unworshipped, unmoved, the mighty idols of old Rome.* Human emotion, which made them Omnipotence once, has left them but stone now. The "Star in the East" has already dimmed the fearful

* "Such was the respect which the Christian Emperors paid even to the prejudices of the Romans, that idols, when proscribed in the provinces, were still tolerated in the capital and allowed to occupy their rich shrines, and sit enthroned in their deserted temples."—*Eustace's Classical Tour.*

halo which the devotion of bloodshed once wreathed round their forms. Forsaken and alone they stand but as the gloomy monuments of the greatest delusion ever organised by the ingenuity of man.

We have now, so to express it, exhibited the frame surrounding the moving picture, which we shall next attempt to present to the reader by mixing with the multitude before the Palace gates.

This assembly resolved itself into three divisions: that collected before the palace steps, that loitering about the public baths, and that reposing in the shade of the groves. The first was of the most consequence in numbers, and of the greatest variety in appearance. Composed of rogues of the worst order from every quarter of the world, it might be said to present, in its general aspect of numerical importance, the very sublime of degradation. Confident in their rude union of common avidity, these worthy citizens vented their insolence on all objects, and in every direction, with a careless impartiality which would have shamed the most victorious efforts of modern mobs. The hubbub of voices was perfectly fearful. The coarse

execrations of drunken Gauls, the licentious witticisms of effeminate Greeks, the noisy satisfaction of native Romans, the clamorous indignation of irritable Jews; all sounded together in one incessant chorus of discordant noises. Nor were the senses of sight and smell more agreeably assailed than the faculty of hearing, by this anomalous congregation. Immodest youth and irreverent age; woman savage, man cowardly; the swarthy Ethiopian beslabbered with stinking oil; the stolid Briton begrimed with dirt; these, and a hundred other varying combinations, to be imagined rather than expressed, met the attention in every direction. To describe the odours exhaled by the heat, from this seething mixture of many pollutions, would be to force the reader to close the book; we prefer to return to the distribution which was the cause of this degrading tumult, and which consisted of small baskets of roasted meat, packed with common fruits and vegetables, and handed, or rather flung down to the mob by the servants of the nobleman who gave the feast. The people revelled in the abundance thus presented to them. They threw

themselves upon it like wild beasts; they devoured it like hogs, or bore it off like plunderers; while, secure in the eminence on which they were placed, the purveyors of this public banquet expressed their contempt for its noisy recipients, by holding their noses, stopping their ears, turning their backs, and other pantomimic demonstrations of lofty and excessive disgust. These actions did not escape the attention of those members of the assembly who, having eaten their fill, were at leisure to make use of their tongues; and who showered an incessant storm of abuse on the heads of their benefactor's retainers.

"See those fellows!" cried one; "they are the waiters at our feast, and they mock us to our faces! Down with the filthy kitchen thieves!"

"Excellently well said, Davus!—but who is to approach them? They stink at this distance!"

"The rotten-bodied knaves have the noses of dogs and the carcases of goats."

Then came a chorus of voices—"Down with them! Down with them!" In the midst of which an indignant freed-man advanced to rebuke the

mob, receiving, as the reward of his temerity, a shower of missiles and a volley of curses; after which he was thus addressed by a huge greasy butcher, hoisted on his companions' shoulders:

"By the soul of the Emperor, could I get near you—you rogue!—I would quarter you with my fingers alone!—A grinning scoundrel that jeers at others! A filthy flatterer that dirts the very ground he walks on. By the blood of the martyrs, should I fling the sweeping of the slaughter-house at him, he knows not where to get himself dried!"

"Thou rag of a man," roared a neighbour of the indignant butcher's, "dost thou frown upon the guests of thy master, the very scrapings of whose skin are worth more than thy whole carcase! It is easier to make a drinking vessel of the skull of a flea, than to make an honest man of such a villainous night-walker as thou art!"

"Health and prosperity to our noble entertainer!" shouted one section of the grateful crowd as the last speaker paused for breath.

"Death to all knaves of parasites!" chimed in another.

"Honour to the citizens of Rome!" roared a third party with modest enthusiasm.

"Give that freed-man our bones to pick!" screamed an urchin from the outskirts of the crowd.

This ingenious piece of advice was immediately followed; and the populace gave vent to a shout of triumph as the unfortunate freed-man scared by a new volley of missiles, retreated with ignominious expedition to the shelter of his patron's halls.

In the slight and purified specimen of the "table talk" of a Roman mob, which we have here ventured to exhibit, the reader will perceive that extraordinary mixture of servility and insolence which characterised not only the conversation, but the actions of the lower orders of society, at the period of which we write. Oppressed and degraded on the one hand, to a point of misery scarcely conceivable to the public of the present day; the poorer classes in Rome were, on the other, invested with such a degree of moral license, and permitted such an extent of political privilege, as flattered their vanity into blinding their sense of indignation. Slaves in their season of servitude, masters

in their hours of recreation, they presented as a class one of the most amazing social anomalies ever existing in any nation; and formed, in their dangerous and artificial position, one of the most important of the internal causes of the downfall of Rome.

The steps of the public baths were almost as crowded as the space before the neighbouring building. Incessant streams of people, either entering or departing, poured over the broad flagstones of its marble colonnades. This concourse, although composed in some parts of the same class of people as that assembled before the palace, presented a certain appearance of respectability. Here and there—chequering the dusky monotony of masses of dirty tunics—might be discerned the refreshing vision of a clean robe, or the grateful indication of a handsome person. Little groups, removed as far as possible from the neighbourhood of the noisy plebeians, were scattered about, either engaged in animated conversation, or listlessly succumbing to the lassitude induced by a recent bath. An instant's attention to the subject of

discourse among the more active of these individuals, will aid us in pursuing our social revelations.

The loudest voice among the speakers at this particular moment, proceeded from a tall thin sinister-looking man, who was haranguing a little group of listeners with great vehemence and fluency.

"I tell you, Socius," said he, turning suddenly upon one of his companions, "that unless new slave-laws are made, my calling is at an end. My patron's estate requires incessant supplies of these wretches. I do my best to satisfy the demand, and the only result of my labour is, that the miscreants either endanger my life, or fly with impunity to the gangs of robbers infesting our woods."

"Truly I am sorry for you, but what alteration would you have made in the slave-laws?"

"I would empower bailiffs to slay upon the spot all slaves whom they thought disorderly, as an example to the rest!"

"What would such a permission avail you? These creatures are necessary, and such a law

would exterminate them in a few months. Can you not break their spirit with labour, bind their strength with chains, and vanquish their obstinacy with dungeons?"

"All this I have done, but they die under the discipline or escape from their prisons. I have now three hundred slaves on my patron's estates. Against those born on our lands I have little to urge. Many of them, it is true, begin the day with weeping and end it with death; but for the most part, thanks to their diurnal allowance of stripes, they are tolerably submissive. It is with the wretches that I have been obliged to purchase from prisoners of war and the people of revolted towns, that I am so dissatisfied. Punishments have no effect on them, they are incessantly indolent, sulky, desperate. It was but the other day that ten of them poisoned themselves while at work in the fields, and fifty more after setting fire to a farm-house while my back was turned, escaped to join a gang of their companions who are now robbers in the woods. These fellows, however, are the last of the troop who will

perpetrate such offences. With the concurrence of my patron, I have adopted a plan that will henceforth tame them efficiently!"

"Are you at liberty to communicate it?"

"By the keys of St. Peter, I wish I could see it practised on every estate in the land! It is this:—Near a sulphur lake at some distance from my farm-house, is a tract of marshy land, overspread here and there by the ruins of an ancient slaughter-house. I propose to dig in this place several subterranean caverns, each of which shall be capable of holding twenty men. Here my mutinous slaves shall sleep after their day's labour. The entrances shall be closed until morning with a large stone, on which I will have engraven this inscription:—'These are the dormitories invented by Gordian, bailiff of Saturninus a nobleman, for the reception of refractory slaves."

"Your plan is ingenious; but I suspect your slaves, so insensible to hardships are the brutal herd, will sleep as unconcernedly in their new dormitories as in their old."

"Sleep! It will be a most original species of

repose that they will taste there! The stench of the sulphur lake will breathe Sabean odours for them over a couch of mud! Their anointing oil will be the slime of attendant reptiles! Their liquid perfumes will be the stagnant oozings from their chamber roof! Their music will be the croaking of frogs and the humming of gnats; and as for their adornments, why they will be decked forth with head-garlands of twining worms, and moveable brooches of cockchafers and toads! Tell me now, most sagacious Socius, do you still think that amidst such luxuries as these my slaves will sleep?"

"No; they will die."

"You are again wrong. They will curse and rave perhaps, but that is of no consequence. They will work the longer above ground to shorten the term of their repose beneath. They will wake at an instant's notice, and come forth at a moment's signal. I have no fear of their dying!"

"Do you leave Rome soon?"

"I go this evening, taking with me such a supply of trustworthy assistants as will enable me

to execute my plan without delay. Farewell, Socius!"

"Most ingenious of bailiffs, I bid you farewell!"

As the worthy Gordian stalked off, big with the dignity of his new projects, the gestures and tones of a man who formed one of a little group collected in a remote part of the portico he was about to quit, attracted his attention. Curiosity formed as conspicuous an ingredient in this man's character as cruelty. He stole behind the base of a neighbouring pillar; and as the frequent repetition of the word "Goths" struck his ear, (the report of that nation's impending invasion having by this time reached Rome,) he carefully disposed himself to listen with the most implicit attention to the speaker's voice.

"Goths!" cried the man in the stern, concentrated accents of despair. "Is there one among us to whom this report of their advance upon Rome does not speak of hope rather than of dread? Have we a chance of rising from the degradation forced on us by our superiors until

this den of heartless triflers and shameless cowards is swept from the very earth that it pollutes ? "

" Your sentiments on the evils of our condition are undoubtedly most just," observed a fat, pompous man, to whom the preceding remarks had been addressed, " but I cannot desire the reform you so ardently hope for. Think of the degradation of being conquered by barbarians ! "

" I am the exile of my country's privileges ; what interest have I in upholding her honour ?—if honour she really has ! " replied the first speaker.

" Nay ! Your expressions are too severe. You are too discontented to be just."

" Am I ? Hear me for a moment, and you will change your opinion. You see me now by my bearing and appearance superior to yonder plebeian herd. You doubtless think that I live at my ease in the world, that I can feel no anxiety for the future about my bodily necessities. What would you say were I to tell you that if I want another meal, a lodging for to-night, a fresh robe for to-morrow, I must rob or flatter some great man to gain them. Yet so it is. I am hopeless,

friendless, destitute. In the whole of the empire there is not an honest calling in which I can take refuge. I must become a pander or a parasite,—a hired tyrant over slaves, or a chartered groveller beneath nobles, if I would not starve miserably in the streets, or rob openly in the woods! This is what I am. Now listen to what I was. I was born free. I inherited from my father a farm, which he had successfully defended from the encroachments of the rich, at the expense of his comfort, his health, and his life. When I succeeded to his lands, I determined to protect them in *my* time, as studiously as he had defended them in *his*. I worked unintermittingly: I enlarged my house, I improved my fields, I increased my flocks. One after another, I despised the threats, and defeated the wiles, of my noble neighbours, who desired possession of my estate to swell their own territorial grandeur. In process of time I married, and had a child. I believed that I was picked out from my race as a fortunate man,—when one night I was attacked by robbers: slaves made desperate by the cruelty of their wealthy

masters. They ravaged my corn-fields, they deprived me of my flocks. When I demanded redress, I was told to sell my lands to those who could defend them,—to those rich nobles whose tyranny had organised the band of wretches who had spoiled me of my possessions, and to whose fraud-gotten treasures the government were well pleased to grant that protection which they had denied to my honest hoards. In my pride I determined that I would still be independent. I planted new crops. With the little remnant of my money I hired fresh servants, and bought more flocks. I had just recovered from my first disaster, when I became the victim of a second. I was again attacked. This time we had arms, and we attempted to defend ourselves. My wife was slain before my eyes; my house was burnt to the ground; I myself only escaped, mutilated with wounds; my child soon afterwards pined and died. I had no wife, no offspring, no house, no money. My fields still stretched round me, but I had none to cultivate them. My walls still tottered at my feet, but I had none to rear them

again, none to inhabit them if they were reared. My father's lands were now become a wilderness to me. I was too proud to sell them to my rich neighbour; I preferred to leave them before I saw them the prey of a tyrant, whose rank had triumphed over my industry, and who is now able to boast that he can travel over ten leagues of senatorial property, untainted by the propinquity of a husbandman's farm. Houseless, homeless, friendless, I have come to Rome alone in my affliction, helpless in my degradation! Do you wonder now that I am careless about the honour of my country? I would have served her with my life and my possessions when she was worthy of my service, but she has cast me off, and I care not who conquers her. I say to the Goths—with thousands who suffer the same tribulation that I now undergo—Enter our gates! Level our palaces to the ground! Confound, if you will, in one common slaughter, we that are victims, with those that are tyrants! Your invasion will bring new lords to the land,—they cannot crush it more, they may oppress it less. Our posterity may gain

their rights by the sacrifice of lives that our country has made worthless. Romans though we are, we are ready to suffer and submit!'"

He stopped; for by this time he had lashed himself into fury. His eyes glared, his cheeks flushed, his voice rose. Could he then have seen the faintest vision of the destiny that future ages had in store for the posterity of the race that now suffered throughout civilised Europe, like him—could he have imagined how, in after years, the "middle class," despised in his day, was to rise to privilege and power; to hold in its just hands the balance of the prosperity of nations; to crush oppression and regulate rule; to soar in its mighty flight above thrones and principalities, and ranks and riches, apparently obedient, but really commanding—could he but have foreboded this, what a light must have burst upon his gloom, what a hope must have soothed him in his despair!

To what further extremities his anger might have carried him, to what proceedings the indignant Gordian, who still listened from his concealment, might have had recourse, it is difficult to

say; for the complaints of the ill-fated landholder and the cogitations of the authoritative bailiff were alike suddenly suspended, by an uproar raging at this moment round a carriage which had just emerged from the palace we have elsewhere described.

This vehicle looked one mass of silver. Embroidered silk curtains fluttered from its windows, gold ornaments studded its polished sides, and it held no less a person than the nobleman who had feasted the people with baskets of meat. This fact had become known to the rabble before the palace gates. Such an opportunity of showing their exultation in their bondage, their real servility in their imaginary independence, was not to be lost, and accordingly they let loose such a torrent of clamorous gratitude on their entertainer's appearance, that a stranger in Rome would have thought the city in revolt. They leapt, they ran, they danced round the prancing horses, they flung their empty baskets into the air, and patted approvingly their "fair round bellies." From every side, as the carriage moved

on, they gained fresh recruits and acquired new importance. The timid fled before them, the noisy shouted with them, the bold plunged into their ranks, and the constant burden of their rejoicing chorus was—"Health to the noble Pomponius! Prosperity to the senators of Rome, who feast us with their food and give us the freedom of their theatres! Glory to Pomponius! Glory to the senators!"

Fate seemed on this day to take pleasure in pampering the insatiable curiosity of Gordian, the bailiff. The cries of the multitude had scarcely died away in the distance, as they followed the departing carriage, when the voices of two men, pitched to a low, confidential tone, reached his ear from the opposite side of the pillar. He peeped cautiously round and saw that they were priests.

"What an eternal jester is that Pomponius," said one voice, "he is going to receive absolution, and he journeys in his chariot of state, as if he were preparing to celebrate his triumph, instead of to confess his sins!"

"Has he committed then a fresh imprudence?"

"Alas, yes! For a senator he is dreadfully wanting in caution! A few days since in a fit of passion, he flung a drinking cup at one of his female slaves. The girl died on the spot, and her brother, who is also in his service, threatened immediate vengeance. To prevent disagreeable consequences to his *body*, Pomponius has sent the fellow to his estates in Egypt; and now, from the same precaution for the welfare of his *soul*, he goes to demand absolution from our holy and beneficent Church."

"I am afraid these incessant absolutions granted to men who are too careless even to make a show of repentance for their crimes, will prejudice us with the people at large."

"Of what consequence are the sentiments of the people while we have their rulers on our side! Absolution is the sorcery that binds these libertines of Rome to our will. *We* know what converted Constantine—politic flattery and ready absolution; the people will tell you it was the sign of the Cross."

"It is true this Pomponius is rich, and may increase our revenues, but still, I fear the indignation of the people."

"Fear nothing, think how long their old institutions imposed on them, and then doubt, if you can, that we may shape them to our wishes as we will. Any deceptions will be successful with a mob, if the instrument employed to forward them be a religion."

The voices ceased. Gordian, who still cherished a vague intention of denouncing the fugitive landholder to the senatorial authorities, employed the liberty afforded to his attention by the silence of the priests in turning to look after his intended victim. To his surprise he saw that the man had left the auditors to whom he had before addressed himself, and was engaged in earnest conversation, in another part of the portico, with an individual who seemed to have recently joined him, and whose appearance was so remarkable that the bailiff had moved a few steps forward to gain a nearer view of him when he was once more arrested by the voices of the priests.

Irresolute for an instant to which party to devote his unscrupulous attention, he returned mechanically to his old position. Ere long, however, his anxiety to hear the mysterious communications proceeding between the landholder and his friend overbalanced his delight in penetrating the theological secrets of the priests. He turned once more, but to his astonishment the objects of his curiosity had disappeared. He stepped to the outside of the portico and looked for them in every direction, but they were nowhere to be seen. Peevish and disappointed, he returned as a last resource to the pillar where he had left the priests, but the time consumed in his investigations after one party had been fatal to his reunion with the other. The churchmen were gone.

Sufficiently punished for his curiosity by his disappointment, the bailiff walked doggedly off towards the Pincian Hill. Had he turned in the contrary direction, towards the Basilica of St. Peter, he would have found himself once more in the neighbourhood of the landholder and his remarkable friend, and would have gained that

acquaintance with the subjects of their conversation, which we intend that the reader shall acquire in the course of the next chapter.

In the meantime our revelations are now at an end, and the reader's attention is released again to the story. But before we once more address ourselves to its requirements, we would again ask those interested in penetrating the internal causes of the catastrophe of Rome, to meditate for an instant on the particles of evidence which we have here collected for them. Let them recal to their minds the concurrent disorganisations forming the fierce social disease raging at this period within the walls of the city, and extending its poisonous influences to the remotest corners of the Empire. Let them in one glance look back at the lower orders, ignorant, licentious, brutalised, oppressed; at the middle classes, outraged, persecuted, forsaken; at the aristocracy, frivolous, irresponsible, unfeeling; at the Church, which should have reformed the corruptions of the State, ambitious, worldly, hypocritical; and they will discover the real depth and extent of the

universal disorganisation of Roman society in that eventful age. Let them finally figure to themselves the effect produced by a nation like the Goths, fresh in its vigorous youth, united in its tremendous purpose, bursting at once upon a people without a sympathy, a principle, an ambition, or a hope, round which they could universally rally as a moral standard in the hour of need—let them figure to themselves this, and they will be little disposed to cavil at the probability of the scenes through which they may be led in the future portions of this work; they will feel little astonishment that civilised Rome should have closed her dazzling career by prostration before an army of Goths.*

* Vide note, in Appendix—"The population of Rome."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH.

In the year 324, on the locality assigned by rumour to the martyrdom of St. Peter, and over the ruins of the Circus of Nero, Constantine erected the church called the Basilica of St. Peter.

For twelve centuries, this building, raised by a man infamous for his murders and his tyrannies, stood uninjured amid the shocks which during that long period devastated the rest of the city. After that time it was removed, tottering to its base from its own reverend and illustrious age, by Pope Julius II., to make way for the foundations of the modern church.

It is towards this structure of twelve hundred years duration, erected by hands stained with blood, and yet preserved as a star of peace in the

midst of stormy centuries of war, that we would direct the reader's attention. What art has done for the modern church, time has effected for the ancient. If the one is majestic to the eye by its grandeur, the other is hallowed to the memory by its age.

As this church by its rise commemorated the triumphant establishment of Christianity as the religion of Rome, so in its progress it reflected every change wrought in the spirit of the new worship by the ambition, the prodigality, or the frivolity of the priests. At first, it stood awful and imposing, beautiful in all its parts as the religion for whose glory it was built. Vast porphyry colonnades decorated its approaches, and surrounded a fountain whose waters issued from the representation of a gigantic pine tree in bronze. Its double rows of aisles, were each supported by forty-eight columns of precious marble. Its flat ceiling was adorned with beams of gilt metal, rescued from the pollution of heathen temples. Its walls were decorated with large paintings of religious subjects, and its tribunal

was studded with elegant mosaics. Thus it rose, simple and yet sublime, awful and yet alluring; in this its beginning, a type of the dawn of the worship which it was elevated to represent. But when flushed with success, the priests seized on Christianity as their path to politics and their introduction to power, the aspect of the Church gradually began to change. As, slowly and insensibly, ambitious man heaped the garbage of his mysteries, his doctrines, and his disputes, about the pristine purity of the structure given him by God, so one by one, gaudy adornments and meretricious alterations arose to sully the majestic Basilica, until the threatening and reproving apparition of the pagan Julian, when both Church and churchmen received in their corrupt progress a sudden and impressive check.

The short period of the revival of idolatry once passed over, the priests, unmoved by the warning they had received, returned with renewed vigour to confuse that which both in their Gospel and their Church had been once simple. Day by day they put forth fresh treatises, aroused fierce

controversies, subsided into new sects; and, day by day, they altered more and more the once noble aspect of the ancient Basilica. They hung their nauseous relics on its mighty walls, they stuck their tiny tapers about its glorious pillars, they wreathed their tawdry fringes around its massive altars. Here they polished, there they embroidered. Wherever there was a window, they curtained it with gaudy cloths; wherever there was a statue, they bedizened it with artificial flowers; wherever there was a solemn recess, they outraged its religious gloom with intruding light; until (arriving at the period we write of) they succeeded so completely in changing the aspect of the building that it looked, within, more like a vast Pagan toy-shop than a Christian church. Here and there, it is true, a pillar or an altar rose unencumbered as of old, appearing as much at variance with the frippery that surrounded it, as a text of Scripture quoted in a sermon of the time. But as regarded the general aspect of the Basilica, the decent glories of its earlier days seemed irrevocably departed and destroyed.

After what has been said of the edifice, the reader will have little difficulty in imagining that the square in which it stood lost whatever elevation of character it might once have possessed, with even greater rapidity than the church itself. If the cathedral now looked like an immense toy-shop, assuredly its attendant colonnades had the appearance of the booths of an enormous fair.

The day, whose decline we have hinted at in the preceding Chapter, was fast verging towards its close, as the inhabitants of the streets on the western bank of the Tiber prepared to join the crowds that they beheld passing by their windows, in the direction of the Basilica of St. Peter. The cause of this sudden confluence of the popular current in one common direction, was made sufficiently apparent to all inquirers who happened to be near a church or a public building, by the appearance in such situations of a large sheet of vellum elaborately illuminated, raised on a high pole, and guarded from contact with the inquisitive rabble by two armed soldiers. The announcements set forth in these strange placards were all

of the same nature and directed to the same end. In each of them the Bishop of Rome informed his "pious and honourable brethren," the inhabitants of the city, that as the next day was the anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Luke, the vigil would necessarily be held on that evening in the Basilica of St. Peter; and that in consideration of the importance of the occasion, there would be exhibited, before the commencement of the ceremony, those precious relics connected with the death of the saint which had become the inestimable inheritance of the Church, and which consisted of a branch of the olive tree to which St. Luke was hung, a piece of the noose—including the knot—which had been passed round his neck, and a picture of the Apotheosis of the Virgin painted by his own hand. After some sentences expressive of lamentation for the sufferings of the saint, which nobody read and which it is unnecessury to reproduce here, the proclamation went on to state that a sermon would be preached in the course of the vigil, and that at a later hour the great chandelier, containing two thousand four hundred

lamps, would be lit to illuminate the church. Finally, the worthy bishop called upon all members of his flock, in consideration of the solemnity of the day, to abstain from sensual pleasures, in order that they might the more piously and worthily contemplate the sacred objects submitted to their view, and digest the spiritual nourishment to be offered to their understandings.

From the specimen we have already given of the character of the populace of Rome, it will perhaps be unnecessary to say that the great attractions presented by this theological bill of fare were the relics and the chandelier. Pulpit eloquence and vigil solemnities alone, must have long exhibited their more sober allurements, before they could have drawn into the streets a fiftieth part of the immense crowd that now hurried towards the desecrated Basilica. Indeed, so vast was the assemblage soon congregated, that the advanced ranks of sight-seers had already filled the church to overflowing, before those in the rear had come within view of the colonnades.

However dissatisfied the unsuccessful portion of

the citizens might feel at their exclusion from the church, they found a powerful counter-attraction in the amusements going forward in the Place, the occupants of which seemed thoroughly regardless of the bishop's admonitions upon the sobriety of behaviour due to the solemnity of the day. As if in utter defiance of the decency and order recommended by the clergy, popular exhibitions of all sorts were set up on the broad flagstones of the great space before the church. Street dancing-girls exercised at every available spot those "gliding gyrations," so eloquently condemned by the worthy Ammianus Marcellinus of orderly and historical memory. Booths crammed with relics of doubtful authenticity; baskets filled with neat manuscript abstracts of furiously controversial pamphlets; Pagan images regenerated into portraits of saints; pictorial representations of Arians writhing in damnation and martyrs basking in halos of celestial light, tempted, in every direction, the more pious among the spectators. Cooks perambulated with their shops on their backs; rival slave-merchants shouted petitions for patronage;

wine-sellers taught Bacchanalian philosophy from the tops of their casks; poets recited compositions for sale; sophisters held arguments destined to convert the wavering, and perplex the ignorant. Incessant motion and incessant noise seemed to be the sole compensations sought by the multitude for the disappointment of exclusion from the church. If a stranger, after reading the proclamation of the day, had proceeded to the Basilica, to feast his eyes on the contemplation of the illustrious aggregate of humanity, entitled by the bishop "his pious and honourable brethren," he must—on mixing at this moment with the assemblage—have either doubted the truth of the episcopal appellation, or have given the citizens credit for that refinement of intrinsic worth which is of too elevated a nature to influence the character of the outward man.

At the time when the sun set, nothing could be more picturesque than the distant view of this joyous scene. The deep red rays of the departing luminary cast their radiance, partly from behind the church, over the vast multitude in the Place.

Brightly and rapidly that rich light roved over the waters that leaped towards it from the fountain in all the loveliness of natural and evanescent form. Bathed in that brilliant glow, the smooth porphyry colonnades reflected chameleon-like ethereal and varying hues; the white marble statues became suffused in a delicate rose-colour, and the sober-tinted trees gleamed in the innermost of their leafy depths as if steeped in the exhalations of a golden mist. While, contrasting strangely with the wondrous radiance around them, the huge bronze pine-tree in the middle of the Place, and the wide front of the Basilica, rose up in gloomy shadow, indefinite and exaggerated, lowering like evil spirits over the joyous beauty of the rest of the scene, and casting their great depths of shade into the very midst of the light whose dominion they despised. Beheld from a distance, this wild combination of vivid brightness and solemn gloom; these buildings, at one place darkened till they looked gigantic, at another lightened till they appeared ethereal; these crowded groups, seeming one great

moving mass gleaming at this point in radiant light, obscured at that in thick shadow, made up a whole so incongruous and yet so beautiful, so grotesque and yet so sublime, that the scene looked for the moment, more like some inhabited meteor, half eclipsed by its propinquity to earth, than a mortal and material prospect.

The beauties of this atmospheric effect were of far too serious and sublime a nature to interest the multitude in the Place. Out of the whole assemblage, but two men watched that glorious sunset with even an appearance of the admiration and attention which it deserved. One was the landholder whose wrongs were related in the preceding chapter—the other his remarkable friend.

These two men formed a singular contrast to each other, both in demeanour and appearance, as they gazed forth upon the crimson heaven. The landholder was an undersized restless-looking man, whose features, naturally sharp, were now distorted by a fixed expression of misery and discontent. His quick penetrating glance wandered

incessantly from place to place, perceiving all things, but resting on none. In his attention to the scene before him, he appeared to have been led more by the influence of example than by his own spontaneous feelings; for ever and anon, he looked impatiently round upon his friend as if expecting him to speak—but no word or movement escaped his thoughtful companion. Occupied exclusively in his own contemplations, he appeared wholly insensible to any ordinary outward appeal.

In age and appearance, this individual was in the decline of life, for he had numbered sixty years, his hair was completely gray, and his face was covered with deep wrinkles. Yet, in spite of these disadvantages, he was in the highest sense of the word a handsome man. Though worn and thin, his features were still bold and regular, and there was an elevation about the habitual mournfulness of his expression, and an intelligence about his somewhat severe and earnest eyes, that bore eloquent testimony to the superiority of his intellectual powers. As he now stood gazing fixedly out into the glowing sky, his tall meagre

figure half supported upon his staff, his lips firmly compressed, his brow slightly frowning, and his attitude firm and motionless; the most superficial observer must have felt immediately that he looked on no ordinary being. The history of a life of deep thought—perhaps of long sorrow—seemed written in every lineament of his meditative conntenance; and there was a natural dignity in his manner, which evidently restrained his restless companion from offering any determined interruption to the course of his reflections.

Slowly and gorgeously the sun had continued to wane in the horizon, until he was now lost to view. As his last rays sunk behind the distant hills, the stranger started from his reverie and approached the landholder, pointing with his staff towards the fast-fading brightness of the western sky.

"Probus," said he, in a low melancholy voice, "as I looked on that sunset, I thought on the condition of the Church."

"I see little in the Church to think of, or in the sunset to observe," replied his companion.

"How pure, how vivid," murmured the other,

scarcely heeding the landholder's remark, "was the light which that sun cast upon this earth at our feet! How nobly for a time its brightness triumphed over the shadows around; and yet, in spite of the promise of that radiance, how swiftly did it fade ere long in its conflict with the gloom —how thoroughly, even now, has it departed from the earth, and withdrawn the beauty of its glory from the heaven! Already the shadows are lengthening around us, and shrouding in their darkness every object in the Place. But a short hour hence, and—should no moon arise—the gloom of night will stretch unresisted over Rome!"

"To what purpose do you tell me this?"

"Are you not reminded by what we have observed, of the course of the worship which it is our privilege to profess? Does not that first beautiful light denote its pure and perfect rise; that short conflict between the radiance and the gloom, its successful preservation, by the Apostles and the Fathers; that rapid fading of the radiance, its desecration in later times; and the gloom which now surrounds us, the destruction which

has encompassed it in this age we live in?—A destruction which nothing can avert but a return to that pure first faith that should now be the hope of our religion, as the moon is the hope of night!"

"How should we reform? Do people who have no liberties care about a religion? Who is to teach them?"

"I have—I will. It is the purpose of my life to restore to them the holiness of the ancient Church; to rescue them from the snares of traitors to the faith, whom men call priests. They shall learn through me that the Church knew no adornment once, but the presence of the pure; that the priest craved no finer vestment than his holiness; that the Gospel, which once taught humility and now raises dispute, was in former days the rule of faith—sufficient for all wants, powerful over all difficulties. Through *me* they shall know that in times past it was the guardian of the heart; through *me* they shall see that in times present it is the plaything of the proud; through *me* they shall fear that in times future it may become the exile of the Church! To this task I have vowed

myself; to overthrow this idolatry—which, like another Paganism, rises among us with its images, its relics, its jewels, and its gold—I will devote my child, my life, my energies, and my possessions. From this attempt I will never turn aside—from this determination I will never flinch. While I have a breath of life in me, I will persevere in restoring to this abandoned city the true worship of the Most High!"

He ceased abruptly. The intensity of his agitation seemed suddenly to deny to him the faculty of speech. Every muscle in the frame of that stern, melancholy man quivered at the immortal promptings of the soul within him. There was something almost feminine in his universal susceptibility to the influence of one solitary emotion. Even the rough, desperate landholder felt awed by the enthusiasm of the being before him; and forgot his wrongs, terrible as they were,—and his misery, poignant as it was,—as he gazed upon his companion's face.

For some minutes neither of the men said more. Soon, however, the last speaker calmed his

agitation, with the facility of a man accustomed to stifle the emotions that he cannot crush, and advancing to the landholder, took him sorrowfully by the hand.

"I see, Probus, that I have amazed you," said he, "but the Church is the only subject on which I have no discretion. In all other matters I have conquered the rashness of my early manhood; in this I have to wrestle with my hastier nature still. When I look on the mockeries that are acting around us; when I behold a priesthood deceivers, a people deluded, a religion defiled, then, I confess it, my indignation overpowers my patience, and I burn to destroy, where I ought only to hope to reform."

"I knew you always violent of imagination; but when I last saw you, your enthusiasm was love. Your wife——"

"Peace! She deceived me!"

"Your child——"

"Lives with me at Rome."

"I remember her an infant, when, fourteen years since, I was your neighbour in Gaul. On

my departure from the province, you had just returned from a journey into Italy, unsuccessful in your attempts to discover there a trace either of your parents, or of that elder brother, whose absence from you you were wont so continually to lament. Tell me, have you, since that period, discovered the members of your ancient household? Hitherto you have been so occupied in listening to the history of my wrongs, that you have scarcely spoken of the changes in your life since we last met."

"If, Probus, I have been silent to you concerning myself, it is because for me retrospection has little that attracts. While yet it was in my power to return to those parents whom I deserted in my boyhood, I thought not of repentance; and now, that they must be but too surely lost to me, my yearning towards them is of no avail. Of my brother, from whom I parted in a moment of childish jealousy and anger, and whose pardon and love I would give up even my ambition to acquire, I have never yet discovered a trace. Atonement to those whom I injured in early life is a

privilege denied to the prayers of my age. From my parents and my brother I departed unblest, and unforgiven by them I feel that I am doomed to die! My life has been careless, useless, godless, passing from rapine and violence to luxury and indolence, and leading me to the marriage which I exulted in when I last saw you, but which I now feel was unworthy, alike in its motives and its results. But blessed and thrice blessed be that last calamity of my wicked existence, for it opened my eyes to the truth,—it made a Christian of me while I was yet alive! It was then, Probus, when I found myself deserted and dishonoured, left alone to be the guardian of my helpless child, exiled for ever from a home that I had myself forsaken, that I repented me in earnest of my misdeeds, that I sought wisdom from the book of salvation, and the conduct of life from the fathers of the Church. It was at that time that I determined to devote my child, like Samuel of old, to the service of heaven, and myself to the reformation of our degraded worship. As I have already told you, I forsook my abode and changed my

name, (remember it is as '*Numerian*' that you must henceforth address me), that of my former self no remains might be left, that of my former companions not one might ever discover and tempt me again. With incessant care have I shielded my daughter from the contamination of the world. As a precious jewel in a miser's hands she has been watched and guarded in her father's house. Her destiny is to soothe the afflicted, to watch the sick, to succour the forlorn, when I, her teacher, have restored to the land the dominion of its ancient faith, and the guidance of its faultless Gospel. We have neither of us an affection, or a hope that can bind us to the things of earth. Our hearts look both towards heaven; our expectations are only from on high!"

"Do not set your hopes too firmly on your child. Remember how the nobles of Rome have destroyed the household I once had, and tremble for your own."

"I have no fear for my daughter; she is cared for in my absence by one who is vowed to aid me in my labours for the Church. It is now nearly a

year since I first met Ulpius, and from that time forth he has devoted himself to my service and watched over my child."

"Who is this Ulpius, that you should put such faith in him?"

"He is a man of age like mine. I found him, like me, worn down by the calamities of his early life, and abandoned, as I had once been, to the delusions of the Pagan gods. He was desolate, suffering, forlorn, and I had pity on him in his misery. I proved to him that the worship he still professed was banished for its iniquities from the land; that the religion which had succeeded it had become defiled by man, and that there remained but one faith for him to choose, if he would be saved—the faith of the early Church. He heard me and was converted. From that moment he has served me patiently and helped me willingly. Under the roof where I assemble the few who as yet are true believers, he is always the first to come and the last to remain. No word of anger has ever crossed his lips; no look of impatience has ever appeared in his eyes. Though sorrowful he

is gentle; though suffering he is industrious. .I have trusted him with all I possess, and I glory in my credulity! Ulpius is incorruptible!"

"And your daughter?—is Ulpius reverenced by her, as he is respected by you?"

"She knows that her duty is to love whom I love, and to avoid whom I avoid. Can you imagine that a Christian virgin has any feelings disobedient to her father's wishes? Come to my house; judge with your own eyes of my daughter and my companion. You, whose misfortunes have left you no home, shall find one, if you will, with me. Come then and labour with me in my great undertaking! You will withdraw your mind from the contemplation of your woes, and merit by your devotion the favour of theMost High."

"No, Numerian, I will still be independent, even of my friends! Nor Rome, nor Italy are abiding-places for me. I go to another land to abide among another people, until the arms of a conqueror shall have restored freedom to the brave and protection to the honest, throughout the countries of the empire."

"Probus, I implore you stay!"

"Never! My determination is taken, Numerian, farewell!"

And the landholder hurried rapidly away, as if fearful to trust his resolution any longer against the persuasions of his friend.

For a few minutes, Numerian stood motionless, gazing wistfully in the direction taken by his companion on his departure. At first, an expression of grief and pity softened the austerity which seemed the habitual characteristic of his countenance when in repose, but soon these milder and tenderer feelings appeared to vanish from his heart as suddenly as they had arisen; his features re-assumed their customary sternness, and he muttered to himself as he mixed with the crowd struggling onwards in the direction of the Basilica—"Let him depart unregretted, he has denied himself to the service of his Maker. He should no longer be my friend."

In this sentence lay the index to the character of the man. His existence was one vast sacrifice, one scene of intrepid self-immolation. Although,

in the brief hints at the events of his life which he had communicated to his friend, he had exaggerated the extent of his errors, he had by no means done justice to the fervour of his penitence, a penitence which outstripped the usual boundaries of repentance, and only began in despair to terminate in fanaticism. His desertion of his father's house, (into the motives of which it is not our present intention to enter) and his long subsequent existence of violence and excess, indisposed his naturally strong passions to submit to the slightest restraint. In obedience to their first impulses, he contracted at a mature age a marriage with a woman thoroughly unworthy of the ardent admiration that she had inspired. When he found himself deceived and dishonoured by her, the shock of such an affliction thrilled through his whole being—crushed all his energies — struck him prostrate, heart and mind, at one blow. The errors of his youth, committed in his prosperity with moral impunity, reacted upon him in his adversity with an influence fatal to his future peace. His repentance was

darkened by despondency; his resolutions were unbrightened by hope. He flew to religion as the suicide flies to the knife—in despair. All that he discerned of encouragement in the doctrines of the priests, or the practice of the church, he condemned as the delusive self-flatteries of human imperfection and arrogance. Period by period he traced back the history of his worship—searching for severity as other men search for commiseration—until he paused at the Christianity of the early days of the Church. In the stoical practice and ungenial theory of the ancient believers, he found a system which sympathised with his new convictions. Day after day he searched anxiously among the records left by the most austere of the primitive fathers, until the constant perusal of their pitiless doctrines led him at length to believe that the very existence within him of the social emotions was in itself a sin. By those emotions he recollected that he had been misled in his youth; and while one of them remained to influence him in his manhood, he believed that his salvation was in danger, and his repentance insincere. Spurred

by his active intellect to forsake the gloomy tranquillity that he would fain have imposed on himself, and to acquire some object in existence to which he could devote his heart as to a passion, he selected as the noblest and purest employment that he could undertake, the reformation of a degraded Church. This design once conceived, it was a part both of his temperament and his principles to deliver himself up unreservedly to its furtherance. Any affection, however innocent in itself, that arose within him unconnected with his great object, he condemned as a relic of his former nature, and crushed—at what expense of anguish none can tell—as betraying a possibility of moral relapse. Layman though he was, he hesitated not an instant in obtaining a building which he could use as a church, and seeking for adherents whom he might teach as a congregation. At every appearance of progress that he imagined he could discern in the course of his perilous labours, he experienced a wild and secret delight which elevated him for the time above all earthly sympathies and considerations. He hoped when others

would have despaired; he worked when others would have fainted. To such a height rose his enthusiasm for his cause, that it blunted his worldly perceptions, rendering him impervious to insult, defenceless against imposition, and insensible to danger, when they encountered him in the prosecution of his designs. He schooled himself to look on his daughter only as a model to be exhibited in proof of the possibility of training others for the promotion of his great plan. He saw in his property and his influence but the means of compassing one sole end. In short, to express it in his own words to Probus the landholder, he had indeed devoted to his undertaking "his life, his child, his energies, and his possessions." *

Leaving all remaining peculiarities in Numerian's character to be discussed at a future opportunity, we will now follow him in his passage through the crowd, to the entrance of the Basilica—continuing to designate him, here and elsewhere, by the name

* If the reader doubts the probability of an attempted reformation of the Roman Church in the 5th century, let him refer to Gibbon, chapter 28, note 174; and to the controversy between Jerome and Vigilantius, "the Protestant of his age."

which he had assumed on his conversion, and by which he had insisted on being addressed during his interview with the fugitive landholder.

Although at the commencement of his progress towards the church, our enthusiast found himself placed among the hindermost of the members of the advancing throng, he soon contrived so thoroughly to outstrip his dilatory and discursive neighbours as to gain, with little delay, the steps of the sacred building. Here, in common with many others, he was compelled to stop, while those nearest the Basilica squeezed their way through its stately doors. In such a situation his remarkable figure could not fail to be noticed, and he was silently recognised by many of the by-standers—some of whom looked on him with wonder, and some with aversion. Nobody, however, approached or spoke to him. Every one felt the necessity of shunning a man whose bold and daily exposures of the abuses of the Church placed in incessant peril his liberty, and even his life.

Among the bystanders who surrounded Numerian, there were nevertheless two who did

not remain content with carelessly avoiding any communication with the intrepid and suspected Reformer. These two men belonged to the lowest order of the clergy, and appeared to be occupied in cautiously watching the actions and listening to the conversation of the individuals immediately around them. The instant they beheld Numerian, they moved so as to elude his observation, taking care at the same time to occupy such a position as enabled them to keep in view the object of their evident distrust.

"Look, Osius," said one, "that man is here again!"

"And doubtless with the same motives which brought him here yesterday," replied the other. "You will see that he will again enter the church, listen to the service, retire to his little chapel near the Pincian Mount, and there attack the doctrines which our brethren have preached, before his ragged mob of adherents, as we know he did last night, and as we suspect he will continue to do, until the authorities think proper to give the signal for his imprisonment."

"I marvel that he should have been permitted to persist so long a time as he has in his course of contumacy towards the Church. Have we not evidence enough in his writings alone to convict him of heresy? The carelessness of the Bishop upon such a matter as this is quite inexplicable!"

"You should consider, Numerian not being a priest, that the carelessness about our interests lies more with the Senate than the Bishop. What time our nobles can spare from their debaucheries, has been lately given to discussions on the conduct of the Emperor in retiring to Ravenna, and will now be dedicated to penetrating the basis of this rumour about the Goths. Besides, even were they at liberty, what care the Senate about theological disputes? They only know this Numerian as a citizen of Rome, a man of some influence and possessions, and, consequently, a person of political importance as a member of the population. In addition to which it would be no easy task for us, at the present moment, to impugn the doctrines broached by our assailant; for the fellow has a troublesome facility of supporting what he says

by the Bible. Believe me, in this matter, our only way of righting ourselves will be to convict him of scandal against the highest dignitaries of the Church."

"The order that we have lately received to track his movements and listen to his discourses, leads me to believe that our superiors are of your opinion."

"Whether my convictions are correct or not, of this I feel assured—that his days of liberty are numbered. It was but a few hours ago that I saw the Bishop's-chamberlain's head-assistant, and he told me that he had heard, through the crevice of a door——"

"Hush! he moves; he is pressing forward to enter the church. You can tell me what you were about to say as we follow him. Quick! let us mix with the crowd."

Ever enthusiastic in the performance of their loathsome duties, these two discreet pastors of a Christian flock followed Numerian with the most elaborate caution into the interior of the sacred building.

Although the sun still left a faint streak of red in the western sky, and the moon had as yet scarcely risen, the great chandelier of two thousand four hundred lamps, mentioned by the Bishop in his address to the people, was already alight. In the days of its severe and sacred beauty, the appearance of the church would have suffered fatally by this blaze of artificial brilliancy; but now that the ancient character of the Basilica was completely changed, now that from a solemn temple it had been altered to the semblance of a luxurious palace, it gained immensely by its gaudy illumination. Not an ornament along the vast extent of its glorious nave, but glittered in vivid distinctness in the dazzling light that poured downwards from the roof. The gilded rafters, the smooth inlaid marble pillars, the rich hangings of the windows, the jewelled candlesticks on the altars, the pictures, the statues, the bronzes, the mosaics, each and all glowed with a steady and luxurious transparency, absolutely intoxicating to the eye. Not a trace of wear, not a vestige of tarnish now appeared on any object. Each

portion of the nave to which the attention was directed, appeared too finely, spotlessly radiant, ever to have been touched by mortal hands. Entranced and bewildered, the observation roamed over the surface of the brilliant scene, until wearied by the unbroken embellishment of the prospect, it wandered for repose to the dimly-lighted aisles, and dwelt with delight upon the soft shadows that hovered about their distant pillars, and the gliding forms that peopled their dusky recesses, or loitered past their lofty walls.

At the moment when Numerian entered the Basilica, a part of the service had just concluded. The last faint echo from the voices of the choir still hung upon the incense-laden air, and the vast masses of the spectators were still grouped in their listening and various attitudes, as the devoted reformer looked forth upon the church. Even he, stern as he was, seemed for a moment subdued by the ineffable enchantment of the scene; but ere long, as if displeased with his own involuntary emotions of admiration, his brow contracted, and he sighed heavily, as (still followed by the atten-

tive spies) he sought the comparative seclusion of the aisles.

During the interval between the divisions of the service, the congregation occupied themselves in staring at the relics, which were inclosed in a silver cabinet with crystal doors, and placed on the top of the high altar. Although it was impossible to obtain a satisfactory view of these ecclesiastical treasures, they nevertheless employed the attention of every one, until the appearance of a priest in the pulpit gave signal of the commencement of the sermon, and admonished all those who had seats to secure them without delay.

To attempt any elaborate analysis of the discourse spoken on this occasion by the preacher, would be to occupy the reader's time very little to his moral or literary advantage. Suffice it to say —ere we proceed to more important matters— that the sermon was prodigiously long; that it was delivered with theatrical vehemence of action, in a gloomy monotony of tone; and that its subject—the martyrdom of St. Luke—served as the foundation on which the zealous preacher erected

the imposing superstructure of a philippic against the Arians. He began by assuming it as just possible that there might have been Arians in the time of St. Luke, continued (reasoning upon his supposition as if it had been a certainty) by expressing his firm conviction that Arians were the murderers of the Evangelist, and concluded—taking the unfortunate Arians as a starting point—by delivering over to unmitigated damnation, in a regular and orderly succession, all nations, religions, sects, and individuals, not prepared to recognise the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome, and the authenticity of the collection of relics in the Basilica of St. Peter.

Passing through the ranks of the auditors of this discourse—some of whom were engaged in counting the lights in the chandelier, to be certain that the bishop had not defrauded them of one out of the two thousand four hundred lamps; others in holding whispered conversations, and opening small boxes of sweetmeats—we again conduct the reader to the outside of the church.

The assemblage here had by this time much

diminished; the shadows flung over the ground by the lofty colonnades had deepened and increased; and in many of the more remote recesses of the Place hardly a human being was to be observed. At one of these extremities, where the pillars terminated in the street and the obscurity was most intense, stood a solitary old man keeping himself cautiously concealed in the darkness, and looking out anxiously upon the public way immediately before him.

He had waited but a short time when a handsome chariot, preceded by a body-guard of gaily-attired slaves, stopped within a few paces of his lurking-place, and the voice of the person it contained pronounced audibly the following words:—

"No! no! Drive on—we are later than I thought. If I stay to see this illumination of the Basilica, I shall not be in time to receive my guests for to-night's banquet. Besides this inestimable kitten of the breed most worshipped by the ancient Egyptians has already taken cold, and I would not for the world expose the susceptible animal any longer than is necessary to the

dampness of the night-air. Drive on, good Carrio, drive on!"

The old man scarcely waited for the conclusion of this speech before he ran up to the chariot, where he was immediately confronted by two heads, one that of Vetranio the senator, the other that of a glossy black kitten adorned with a collar of rubies, and half enveloped in its master's ample robes. Before the astonished noble could articulate a word, the man whispered in hoarse, hurried accents, "I am Ulpius—dismiss your servants—I have something important to say!"

"Ha! My worthy Ulpius! You have a most unhappy faculty of delivering a message with the manner of an assassin! But I must pardon your unpleasant abruptness in consideration of your diligence. My excellent Carrio, if you value my approbation, remove your companions and yourself out of hearing!"

The Freedman yielded instant obedience to his master's mandate. The following conversation then took place, the strange man opening it thus:

"You remember your promise?"

"I do."

"Upon your honour as a nobleman and a senator, you are prepared to abide by it whenever it is necessary?"

"I am."

"Then at the dawn of morning meet me at the private gate of your palace garden, and I will conduct you to Antonina's bedchamber."

"The time will suit me. But why at the dawn of morning?"

"Because the Christian dotard will keep a vigil until midnight, which the girl will most probably attend. I wished to tell you this at your palace, but I heard there, that you had gone to Aricia, and would return by way of the Basilica. So I posted myself to intercept you thus."

"Industrious Ulpius!"

"Remember your promise!"

Vetranio leaned forward to reply, but Ulpius was gone.

As the senator again commanded his equipage to move on, he looked from its window, as if once more expecting to see his strange adherent still

lurking near his chariot. He only perceived, however, a man whom he did not know, followed by two others, walking rapidly past him. They were Numerian and the spies.

"At last, my projects are approaching consummation," exclaimed Vetranio to himself, as he and his kitten rolled off in the chariot. "It is well that I thought of securing possession of Julia's villa to-day, for I shall now, assuredly, want to use it to-morrow. Jupiter! What a mass of dangers, contradictions, and mysteries, encompass this affair! When I think that I, who prided myself on my philosophy, have quitted Ravenna; borrowed a private villa; leagued myself with an uncultivated plebeian; and all for the sake of a girl, who has already deceived my expectations by gaining me as a music-master without admitting me as a lover, I am positively astonished at my own weakness! Still, it must be owned that the complexion my adventure has lately assumed, renders it of some interest in itself. The mere pleasure of penetrating the secrets of this Numerian's household, is by no means the least among

the numerous attractions of my design. How has he gained his influence over the girl? Why does he keep her in such strict seclusion? Who is this old half-frantic, unceremonious man-monster, calling himself Ulpius; refusing all reward for his villany; raving about a return to the old religion of the gods; and exulting in the promise he has extorted from me, as a good pagan, to support the first restoration of the ancient worship that may be attempted in Rome? Where does he come from? Why does he outwardly profess himself a Christian? What sent him into Numerian's service? By the girdle of Venus! Everything connected with the girl, is as incomprehensible as herself! But patience—patience! A few hours more, and these mysteries will be revealed. In the meantime, let me think of my banquet, and of its presiding deity, the Nightingale Sauce!"

CHAPTER III.

ANTONINA.

Who that has been at Rome does not remember with delight, the attractions of the Pincian Hill? Who, after toiling through the wonders of the dark, melancholy city, has not been revived by a visit to its shady walks, and by breathing its fragrant breezes? Amid the solemn mournfulness that reigns over declining Rome, this delightful elevation rises light, airy and inviting, at once a refreshment to the body and a solace to the spirit. From its smooth summit, the city is seen in its utmost majesty, and the surrounding country in its brightest aspect. The crimes and miseries of Rome seem deterred from approaching its favoured soil; it impresses the mind as a place set apart by common consent for the presence of the

innocent and the joyful—as a scene that rest and recreation keep sacred from the intrusion of tumult and toil.

Its appearance in modern days is the picture of its character for ages past. Successive wars might dull its beauties for a time, but peace invariably restored them in all their pristine loveliness. The old Romans called it "The Mount of Gardens." Throughout the disasters of the Empire and the convulsions of the Middle Ages, it continued to merit its ancient appellation, and a "Mount of Gardens" it still triumphantly remains to the present day.

At the commencement of the fifth century, the magnificence of the Pincian Hill was at its zenith. Were it consistent with the conduct of our story, to dwell upon the glories of its palaces and its groves, its temples and its theatres, such a glowing prospect of artificial splendour aided by natural beauty, might be spread before the reader as would tax his credulity, while it excited his astonishment. Such a task, however, it is here unnecessary to attempt. It is not for the wonders

of ancient luxury and taste, but for the abode of the zealous and religious Numerian, that we find it now requisite to arouse interest and engage attention.

At the back of the Flaminian extremity of the Pincian Hill, and immediately overlooking the city wall, stood, at the period of which we write, a small but elegantly built house surrounded by a little garden of its own, and protected at the back by the lofty groves and outbuildings of the palace of Vetranio the senator. This abode had been at one time a sort of summer house belonging to the former proprietor of a neighbouring mansion.

Profligate necessities had obliged the owner to part with this portion of his possessions, which was purchased by a merchant well known to Numerian, who received it as a legacy at his friend's death. Disgusted as soon as his reforming projects took possession of his mind, at the bare idea of propinquity to the ennobled libertines of Rome, the austere Christian determined to abandon his inheritance, and to sell it to another; but at the repeated entreaties of his daughter, he at length

consented to change his purpose, and sacrifice his antipathy to his luxurious neighbours to his child's youthful attachment to the beauties of Nature, as displayed in his legacy on the Pincian Mount. In this instance only, did the natural affection of the father prevail over the acquired severity of the reformer. Here he condescended for the first and the last time, to the sweet trivialities of youth. Here, indulgent in spite of himself, he fixed his little household, and permitted to his daughter her sole recreations of tending the flowers in the garden, and luxuriating in the loveliness of the distant view.

* * * * *

The night has advanced an hour since the occurrences mentioned in the preceding chapter. The clear and brilliant moonlight of Italy now pervades every district of the glorious city, and bathes in its pure effulgence the groves and palaces on the Pincian Mount. From the garden of Numerian, the irregular buildings of the great suburbs of Rome, the rich undulating country beyond, and the long ranges of mountains in the

distance, are now all visible in the soft and luxurious light. Near the spot which commands this view, not a living creature is to be seen on a first examination; but on a more industrious and patient observation, you are subsequently able to detect at one of the windows of Numerian's house, half hidden by a curtain, the figure of a young girl.

Soon this solitary form approaches nearer to the eye; the moonbeams that have hitherto shone only upon the window now illuminate other objects. First, they display a small, white arm; then a light, simple robe; then a fair, graceful neck; and finally a bright, youthful, innocent face, directed stedfastly towards the wide moon-brightened prospect of the distant mountains.

For some time the girl remains in contemplation at her window. Then she leaves her post, and almost immediately re-appears at a door leading into the garden. Her figure, as she advances towards the lawn before her, is light and small—a natural grace and propriety appear in her movements—she holds pressed to her bosom and half

concealed by her robe, a gilt lute. When she reaches a turf bank commanding the same view as the window, she arranges her instrument upon her knee, and with something of restraint in her manner, gently touches the chords. Then, as if alarmed at the sound she has produced, she glances anxiously around her, apparently fearful of being overheard. Her large, dark, lustrous eyes have in them an expression of apprehension; her delicate lips are half parted; a sudden flush rises in her soft, olive complexion, as she examines every corner of the garden. Having completed her survey without discovering any cause for the suspicions she seems to entertain, she again employs herself over her instrument. Once more she strikes the chords, and now with a bolder hand. The notes she produces resolve themselves into a wild, plaintive, irregular melody, alternately rising and sinking as if swayed by the fickle influence of a summer wind. These sounds are soon harmoniously augmented by the young minstrel's voice, which is calm, still, and mellow, and adapts itself with exquisite ingenuity to every arbitrary varia-

tion in the tone of the accompaniment. The song that she has chosen is one of the fanciful odes of the day. It chief merit to her, lies in its alliance to the strange Eastern air, which she heard at her first interview with the senator who presented her with the lute. Paraphrased in English, the words of the composition would run thus:—

THE ORIGIN OF MUSIC.

I.

Spirit, whose dominion reigns
Over Music's thrilling strains,
Whence may be thy distant birth?
Say what tempted thee to earth?

Mortal, listen! I was born
In Creation's early years,
Singing, 'mid the stars of morn,
To the music of the spheres.

Once, as within the realms of space,
I view'd this mortal planet roll,
A yearning towards thy hapless race,
Unbidden, fill'd my seraph soul!

Angels, who had watch'd my birth,
Heard me sigh to sing to earth;
'Twas transgression ne'er forgiv'n
To forget my native Heav'n;
So, they sternly bade me go—
Banish'd to the world below!

II.

Exil'd here, I knew no fears ;
For, though darkness round me clung
Though none heard me in the spheres,
Earth had listeners while I sung.

Young spirits of the Spring-sweet breeze
Came thronging round me, soft and coy ;
Light Wood-nymphs sported in the trees,
And laughing Echo leapt for joy !

Brooding Woe and writhing Pain
Soften'd at my gentle strain ;
Bounding Joy, with footstep fleet,
Ran to nestle at my feet ;
While arous'd, delighted Love
Softly kiss'd me from above !

III.

Since those years of early time,
Faithful still to earth I 've sung ;
Flying through each distant clime,
Ever welcome, ever young !

Still pleas'd, my solace I impart,
Where brightest hopes are scattered dead ;
'Tis mine—sweet gift !—to charm the heart,
Though all its other joys have fled !

Time, that withers all beside,
Harmless past me loves to glide ;
Change, that mortals must obey,
Ne'er shall shake my gentle sway ;
Still, 'tis mine all hearts to move,
In eternity of love !

As the last sounds of her voice and her lute died softly away upon the still night air, an indes-

cribable elevation appeared in the girl's countenance. She looked up rapturously into the far, star-bright sky; her lip quivered; her dark eyes filled with tears, and her bosom heaved with the excess of the emotions that the music and the scene inspired. Then she gazed slowly around her, dwelling tenderly upon the fragrant flower-beds that were the work of her own hands, and looking forth with an expression half reverential, half ecstatic, over the long, smooth, shining plains, and the still, glorious mountains, that had so long been the inspiration of her most cherished thoughts, and that now glowed before her eyes, soft and beautiful as her dreams on her virgin couch. Then overpowered by the artless thoughts and innocent recollections which on the magic wings of Nature and Night came wafted over her mind, she bent down her head upon her lute; pressed her round, dimpled cheek, against its smooth frame, and drawing her fingers mechanically over its strings, abandoned herself unreservedly to the reveries of maidenhood and youth.

Such was the being devoted by her father's

fatal ambition to a life-long banishment from all that is attractive in human art, and beautiful in human intellect! Such was the daughter whose existence was to be one long acquaintance with mortal woe, one unvaried refusal of mortal pleasure, whose thoughts were to be only of sermons and fasts, whose actions were to be confined to the binding of strangers' wounds and the drying of strangers' tears, whose life, in brief, was doomed to be the embodiment of her father's austere ideal of the austere virgins of the ancient Church!

Deprived of her mother, exiled from the companionship of others of her age, permitted no familiarity with any living being—no sympathies with any other heart, commanded but never indulged, rebuked but never applauded; she must have sunk beneath the severities imposed on her by her father, but for the venial disobedience committed in the pursuit of the solitary pleasure procured for her by her lute. Vainly, in her hours of study, did she read the fierce anathemas against love, liberty, and pleasure, poetry, painting, and music, gold, silver, and precious stones, which

the ancient Fathers had composed for the benefit of the submissive congregations of former days; vainly did she imagine, during those long hours of theological instruction, that her heart's forbidden longings were banished and destroyed—that her patient and child-like disposition was bowed in complete subserviency to the most rigorous of her father's commands. No sooner were her interviews with Numerian concluded, than the promptings of that nature within us, which artifice may warp but can never destroy, lured her into a forgetfulness of all that she had heard and a longing for much that was forbidden. We live, in this existence, but by the companionship of some sympathy, aspiration, or pursuit, which serves us as our habitual refuge from the tribulations we inherit from the outer world. The same feeling which led Antonina, in her childhood, to beg for a flower-garden; in her girlhood, induced her to gain possession of a lute.

The passion for music which prompted her visit to Vetranio, which alone saved her affections from pining in the solitude imposed on them, and which

occupied her leisure hours in the manner we have already described, was an inheritance of her birth.

Her Spanish mother had sung to her, hour after hour, in her cradle, for the short time during which she was permitted to watch over her child. The impression thus made on the dawning faculties of the infant, nothing ever effaced. Though her earliest perceptions were greeted only by the sight of her father's misery; though the form which his despairing penitence soon assumed, doomed her to a life of seclusion and an education of admonition, the passionate attachment to the melody of sound, inspired by her mother's voice—almost imbibed at her mother's breast, lived through all neglect and survived all opposition. It found its nourishment in childish recollections, in snatches of street minstrelsy heard through her window, in the passage of the night-winds of winter through the groves on the Pincian Mount; and received its rapturous gratification in the first audible sounds from the Roman senator's lute. How her possession of an instrument, and her skill in playing, were subsequently gained, the reader

already knows from Vetranio's narrative at Ravenna. Could the frivolous senator have discovered the real intensity of the emotions his art was raising in his pupil's bosom, while he taught her; could he have imagined how incessantly, during their lessons, her sense of duty struggled with her love for music—how completely she was absorbed, one moment by an agony of doubt and fear, another, by an ecstacy of enjoyment and hope; he would have felt little of that astonishment at her coldness towards himself, which he so warmly expressed at his interview with Julia in the gardens of the Court. In truth, nothing could be more complete than Antonina's childish unconsciousness of the feelings with which Vetranio regarded her. In entering his presence, whatever remnant of her affections remained unwithered by her fears, was solely attracted and engrossed by the beloved and beautiful lute. In receiving the instrument she almost forgot the giver, in the triumph of possession; or, if she thought of him at all, it was to be grateful for having escaped uninjured from a member of that class, for whom

her father's reiterated admonitions had inspired her with a vague feeling of dread and distrust, and to determine that, now she had acknowledged his kindness and departed from his domains, nothing should ever induce her to risk discovery by her father and peril to herself, by ever entering them again.

Innocent in her isolation, almost infantine in her natural simplicity, a single enjoyment was sufficient to satisfy all the passions of her age. Father, mother, lover and companion; liberties, amusements, and adornments—they were all summed up for her in that simple lute. The archness, the liveliness, and the gentleness of her disposition; the poetry of her nature and the affection of her heart; the happy bloom of youth which seclusion could not all wither, nor distorted precept taint, were now entirely nourished, expanded, and freshened—such is the creative power of human emotion—by that inestimable possession. She could speak to it, smile on it, caress it; and believe in the ecstacy of her delight, in the carelessness of her self-delusion, that it sympathised

with her joy. During her long solitudes, when she was silently watched in her father's absence by the brooding, melancholy stranger whom he had set over her, it became a companion dearer than the flower-garden, dearer even than the plains and mountains which formed her favourite view. When her father returned, and she was led forth to sit in a dark place among strange, silent people, and to listen to interminable declamations, it was a solace to think of the instrument, as it lay hidden securely in her chamber; and to ponder delightedly on what new music of her own she should play upon it next. And then, when evening arrived, and she was left alone in her garden—then came the hour of moonlight and song; the moment of rapture and melody that drew her out of herself, elevated her she felt not how, and transported her she knew not whither.

But, while we thus linger over reflections on motives and examinations into character, we are called back to the outer world of passing interests and events, by the appearance of another figure on the scene. We left Antonina in the garden

thinking over her lute. She still remains in her meditative position, but she is now no longer alone.

From the same steps by which she had descended a man now advances into the garden, and walks towards the place she occupies. His gait is limping; his stature crooked; his proportions distorted. His large, angular features, stand out in gaunt contrast to his shrivelled cheeks. His dry, matted hair has been burnt by the sun into a strange, tawny brown. His expression is one of fixed, stern, mournful thought. As he steps stealthily along, advancing towards Antonina, he mutters to himself, and clutches mechanically at his garments, with his lank, shapeless fingers. The radiant moonlight falling full upon his countenance invests it with a livid, mysterious, spectral appearance: seen by a stranger at the present moment he would have been almost awful to look upon.

This was the man who had intercepted Vetranio on his journey home, and who had now hurried back so as to regain his accustomed post before his master's return, for he was the same individual

mentioned by Numerian as his aged convert, Ulpius, in his interview with the landholder at the Basilica of St. Peter.

When Ulpius had arrived within a few paces of the girl he stopped, saying in a hoarse, thick voice:

"Hide your toy—Numerian is at the gates!"

Antonina started violently as she listened to those repulsive accents. The blood rushed into her cheeks; she hastily covered the lute with her robe; paused an instant as if intending to speak to the man, then shuddered violently and hurried towards the house.

As she mounted the steps Numerian met her in the hall. There was now no chance of hiding the lute in its accustomed place.

"You stay too late in the garden," said the father, looking proudly in spite of all his austerity upon his beautiful daughter as she stood by his side. "But what affects you?" he added, noticing her confusion. "You tremble; your colour comes and goes; your lips quiver; give me your hand!"

As Antonina obeyed him a fold of the treach-

erous robe slipped aside, and discovered a part of the frame of the lute. Numerian's quick eye discovered it immediately. He snatched the instrument from her feeble grasp. His astonishment on beholding it was too great for words, and for an instant he confronted the poor girl, whose pale face looked rigid with terror, in ominous and expressive silence.

"This thing," said he at length, "this invention of libertines in my house; in my daughter's possession!" and he dashed the lute into fragments on the floor.

For one moment Antonina looked incredulously on the ruins of the beloved companion which was the centre of all her happiest expectations for future days. Then as she began to estimate the reality of her deprivation her eyes lost all their heaven-born brightness, and filled to overflowing with the tears of earth.

"To your chamber!" thundered Numerian, as she knelt sobbing convulsively over those hapless fragments. "To your chamber! To-morrow shall bring this mystery of iniquity to light!"

She rose humbly to obey him, for indignation had no part in the emotions that shook her gentle and affectionate nature. As she moved towards the room that no lute was henceforth to occupy, as she thought on the morrow that no lute was henceforth to enliven, her grief almost overpowered her. She turned back and looked imploringly at her father, as if entreating permission to pick up even the smallest of the fragments at his feet.

"To your chamber!" he reiterated, sternly. "Am I to be disobeyed to my face?"

Without any repetition of her silent remonstrance, she instantly retired. As soon as she was out of sight, Ulpius ascended the steps and stood before the angered father.

"Look, Ulpius," cried Numerian, "my daughter whom I have so carefully cherished, whom I intended for an example to the world, has deceived me, even thus!"

He pointed as he spoke, to the ruins of the unfortunate lute, but Ulpius did not address to him a word in reply, and he hastily continued:—

"I will not sully the solemn offices of to-night

by interrupting them with my worldly affairs. To-morrow, I will interrogate my disobedient child. In the meantime, do not imagine, Ulpius, that I connect you in any way with this wicked and unworthy deception! In you I have every confidence, in your faithfulness I have every hope!"

Again he paused, and again Ulpius kept silence. Any one less agitated, less confiding, than his unsuspicious master, would have remarked that a faint sinister smile, was breaking forth upon his haggard countenance. But Numerian's indignation was still too violent to permit him to observe, and spite of his efforts to control himself, he again broke forth in complaint.

"On this night too, of all others," cried he, "when I had hoped to lead her among my little assembly of the faithful, to join in their prayers and to listen to my exhortations—on this night I am doomed to find her a player on a Pagan lute, a possessor of the most wanton of the world's vanities! God give me patience to worship this night with unwandering thoughts, for my heart is

vexed at the transgression of my child, as the heart of Eli of old at the iniquities of his sons!"

He was moving rapidly away, when, as if struck with a sudden recollection, he stopped abruptly and again addressed his gloomy companion.

"I will go by myself to the chapel to-night," said he. "You, Ulpius, will stay to keep watch over my disobedient child. Be vigilant, good friend, over my house, for even now, on my return, I thought that two strangers were following my steps, and I forbode some evil in store for me as the chastisement for my sins, even greater than this misery of my daughter's transgression. Be watchful, good Ulpius—be watchful!"

And as he hurried away, the stern, serious man felt as overwhelmed at the outrage that had been offered to his gloomy fanaticism, as the weak, timid girl, at the destruction that had been wreaked upon her harmless lute.

After Numerian had departed, the sinister smile again appeared on the countenance of Ulpius. He stood for a short time fixed in thought, and then began slowly to descend a staircase near him,

which led to some subterranean apartments. He had not gone far, when a slight noise became audible at an extremity of the corridor above. As he listened for a repetition of the sound, he heard a sob, and looking cautiously up, discovered, by the moonlight, Antonina stepping cautiously along the marble pavement of the hall.

She held in her hand a little lamp; her small, rosy feet were uncovered; the tears still streamed over her cheeks. She advanced with the greatest caution (as if fearful of being overheard) until she gained the part of the floor still strewn with the ruins of the broken lute. Here she knelt down, and pressed each fragment that lay before her separately to her lips. Then, hurriedly concealing a single piece in her bosom, she arose and stole quickly away, in the direction by which she had come.

"Be patient till the dawn," muttered her faithless guardian, gazing after her from his concealment, as she disappeared, "it will bring to thy lute a restorer, and to Ulpius an ally!"

CHAPTER IV.

AN APPRENTICESHIP TO THE TEMPLE.

The action of our characters during the night giving occasion to the last two chapters, has now come to a pause. Vetranio is awaiting his guests for the banquet; Numerian is in the chapel, preparing the discourse that he is to deliver to his friends; Ulpius is meditating in his master's house; Antonina is stretched upon her couch, caressing the precious fragment that she has saved from the ruins of her lute. All the immediate agents of our story are, for the present, in repose.

It is our purpose to take advantage of this interval of inaction, and direct the reader's attention to a different country from that selected as the scene of our romance, and to such historical events of past years as connect themselves remark-

ably with the early life of Numerian's perfidious convert. This man will be found a person of great importance (however uninteresting he may hitherto have appeared) in the conduct of our story. It is necessary to the comprehension of his character, and the penetration of such of his purposes as have been already hinted at, and may subsequently appear, that the course of his existence should be traced upwards to its source.

It was in the reign of Julian, when the gods of the Pagan achieved their last triumph over the Gospel of the Christian, that a decently-attired man, leading by the hand a handsome boy of fifteen years of age, entered the gates of Alexandria, and proceeded hastily towards the High Priest's dwelling in the Temple of Serapis.

After a stay of some hours at his destination, the man left the city alone as hastily as he had entered it, and was never after seen at Alexandria. The boy remained in the abode of the High Priest until the next day, when he was solemnly devoted to the service of the Temple.

The boy was the young Emilius, afterwards

called Ulpius. He was nephew to the High Priest to whom he had been confided by his father, a merchant of Rome.

Ambition was the ruling passion of the father of Emilius. It had prompted him to aspire to every distinction granted to the successful by the State, but it had not gifted him with the powers requisite to turn his aspirations in any instance into acquisitions. He passed through existence a disappointed man, planning but never performing, seeing his more fortunate brother rising to the highest distinction in the priesthood, and finding himself irretrievably condemned to exist in the affluent obscurity ensured to him by his mercantile pursuits.

When his brother Macrinus, on Julian's accession to the Imperial throne, arrived at the pinnacle of power and celebrity as High Priest of the Temple of Serapis, the unsuccessful merchant lost all hope of rivalling his relative in the pursuit of distinction. His insatiable ambition discarded from himself now settled on one his infant sons. He determined that his child should be successful

where he had failed. Now that his brother had secured the highest elevation in the Temple, no calling could offer more direct advantages to a member of his household than the priesthood. His family had been from their earliest origin rigid Pagans. One of them had already attained to the most distinguished honours of his gorgeous worship. He determined that another should rival his kinsman, and that that other should be his eldest son.

Firm in this resolution, he at once devoted his child to the great design which he now held continually in view. He knew well that Paganism, revived though it was, was not the universal worship that it had been; that it was now secretly resisted, and might, soon, be openly opposed by the persecuted Christians throughout the empire; and that if the young generation were to guard it successfully from all future encroachments, and to rise securely to its highest honours, more must be exacted from them, than the easy attachment to the ancient religion required from the votaries of former days. Then, the per-

formance of the most important offices in the priesthood was compatible with the possession of military or political rank. Now, it was to the Temple, and to the Temple only, that the future servant of the gods should be devoted. Resolving thus, the father took care that all the son's occupations and rewards should, from his earliest years, be in some way connected with the career for which he was intended. His childish pleasures were to be conducted to sacrifices and auguries; his childish playthings and prizes were images of the deities. No opposition was offered on the boy's part to this plan of education. Far different from his younger brother, whose turbulent disposition defied all authority, he was naturally docile; and his imagination, vivid beyond his years, was easily led captive by any remarkable object presented to it. With such encouragement, his father became thoroughly engrossed by the occupation of forming him for his future existence. His mother's influence over him was jealously watched; the secret expression of her love, of her sorrow at the prospect of parting with him,

was ruthlessly suppressed, whenever it was discovered; and his younger brother was neglected, almost forgotten, in order that the parental watchfulness might be entirely and invariably devoted to the eldest son.

When Emilius had numbered fifteen years, his father saw with delight that the time had come when he could witness the commencement of the realisation of all his projects. The boy was removed from home, taken to Alexandria, and gladly left, by his proud and triumphant father, under the especial guardianship of Macrinus, the High Priest.

The chief of the temple fully sympathised in his brother's designs for the young Emilius. As soon as the boy had entered on his new occupations, he was told that he must forget all that he had left behind him at Rome; that he must look upon the High Priest as his father, and upon the Temple, henceforth, as his home; and that the sole object of his present labours and future ambition, must be to rise in the service of the gods. Nor did Macrinus stop here. So thoroughly

anxious was he to stand to his pupil in the place of a parent, and to secure his allegiance by withdrawing him in every way from the world in which he had hitherto lived, that he even changed his name, giving to him one of his own appellations, and describing it as a privilege to stimulate him to future exertions. From the boy Emilius, he was now permanently transformed to the student Ulpius.

With such a natural disposition as we have already described, and under such guardianship as that of the High Priest, there was little danger that Ulpius would disappoint the unusual expectations which had been formed of him. His attention to his new duties never relaxed; his obedience to his new masters never wavered. Whatever Macrinus demanded of him he was sure to perform. Whatever longings he might feel to return to home, he never discovered them—he never sought to gratify the tastes naturally peculiar to his age. The high priest and his colleagues were astonished at the extraordinary readiness with which the boy himself forwarded

their intentions for him. Had they known how elaborately he had been prepared for his future employments at his father's house, they would have been less astonished at their pupil's unusual docility. Trained as he had been, he must have shown a more than human perversity had he displayed any opposition to his uncle's wishes. He had been permitted no childhood, either of thought or action. His natural precocity had been seized as the engine to force his faculties into a perilous and unwholesome maturity; and when his new duties demanded his attention, he entered on them with the same sincerity of enthusiasm which his boyish coevals would have exhibited towards a new sport. His gradual initiation into the mysteries of his religion, created a strange, voluptuous sensation of fear and interest in his mind. He heard the oracles, and he trembled; he attended the sacrifices and the auguries, and he wondered. All the poetry of the bold and beautiful superstition to which he was devoted, flowed overwhelmingly into his young heart, absorbing the service of his fresh imagination, and transporting him incessantly

from the vital realities of the outer world, to the shadowy regions of aspiration and thought.

But his duties did not entirely occupy the attention of Ulpius. The boy had his peculiar pleasures as well as his peculiar occupations. When his employments were over for the day, it was a strange, unearthly, vital enjoyment to him to wander softly in the shade of the Temple porticos, looking down from his great mysterious eminence upon the populous and sun-brightened city at his feet; watching the brilliant expanse of the waters of the Nile glittering joyfully in the dazzling and pervading light; raising his eyes from the fields and woods, the palaces and gardens, that stretched out before him below, to the lovely and cloudless sky that watched round him afar and above, and that awoke all that his new duties had left of the joyfulness, the affectionate sensibility which his rare intervals of uninterrupted intercourse with his mother had implanted in his heart. Then when the daylight began to wane, and the moon and stars already grew beautiful in their places in the firmament, he would pass into the subter-

ranean vaults of the edifice, trembling as his little taper scarcely dispelled the dull, solemn gloom, and listening with breathless attention for the voices of those guardian spirits, whose fabled habitation was made in the apartments of the sacred place. Or—when the multitude had departed for their amusements and their homes—he would steal into the lofty halls and wander round the pedestals of the mighty statues, breathing fearfully the still atmosphere of the Temple, and watching the passage of the cold, melancholy moonbeams through the openings in the roof, and over the colossal limbs and features of the images of the Pagan gods. Sometimes when the services of Serapis, and the cares attendant on his communications with the Emperor were concluded, Macrinus would lead his pupil into the garden of the priests, and praise him for his docility till his heart throbbed with gratitude and pride. Sometimes he would convey him cautiously outside the precincts of the sacred place, and show him in the suburbs of the city, silent, pale, melancholy men, gliding suspiciously through the gay, crowded

streets. Those fugitive figures, he would declare were the enemies of the Temple and all that it contained; conspirators against the Emperor and the gods; wretches who were to be driven forth as outcasts from humanity; whose appellation was "Christian;" and whose impious worship, if tolerated, would deprive him of the uncle whom he loved, of the Temple that he reverenced, and of the priestly dignity and renown that it should be his life's ambition to acquire.

Thus tutored in his duties by his guardian, and in his recreations by himself, as time wore on, the boy gradually lost every remaining characteristic of his age. Even the remembrance of his mother and his mother's love, grew faint on his memory. Serious, solitary, thoughtful, he lived but to succeed in the Temple; he laboured but to emulate the high priest. All his feelings and faculties were now enslaved by an ambition, at once unnatural at his present age, and ominous of affliction for his future life. The design that Macrinus had contemplated as the work of years, was perfected in a few months. The hope that his father had

scarce dared to entertain for his manhood, was already accomplished in his youth.

In these preparations for future success passed three years of the life of Ulpius. At the expiration of that period, the death of Julian darkened the brilliant prospects of the Pagan world. Scarcely had the priests of Serapis recovered the first shock of astonishment and grief, consequent upon the fatal news of the vacancy in the Imperial throne, when the edict of toleration, issued by Jovian the new Emperor, reached the city of Alexandria, and was elevated on the walls of the temple.

The first sight of this proclamation (permitting freedom of worship to the Christians) aroused in the highly-wrought disposition of Ulpius, the most violent emotions of anger and contempt. The enthusiasm of his character and age, guided invariably in the one direction of his worship, took the character of the wildest fanaticism when he discovered the Emperor's careless infringement of the supremacy of the temple. He volunteered, in the first moments of his fury, to tear down the edict from the walls; to lead an attack on the

meetings of the triumphant Christians; or to travel to the Imperial abode, and exhort Jovian to withdraw his act of perilous leniency ere it was too late. With difficulty did his more cautious confederates restrain him from the execution of his impetuous designs. For two days he withdrew himself from his companions, and brooded in solitude over the injury offered to his beloved superstition, and the prospective augmentation of the influence of the Christian sect.

But the despair of the young enthusiast was destined to be further augmented by a private calamity, at once mysterious in its cause and overwhelming in its effect. Two days after the publication of the edict, the High Priest Macrinus, in the prime of vigour and manhood, suddenly died.

To narrate the confusion and horror within and without the temple on the discovery of this fatal event, to describe the execrations and tumults of the priests and the populace, who at once suspected the favoured and ambitious Christians of causing, by poison, the death of their spiritual ruler, might

be interesting as a history of the manners of the times, but is immaterial to the object of this Chapter. We prefer rather to trace the effect on the mind of Ulpius, of his personal and private bereavement; of this loss—irretrievable to him—of the master whom he loved and the guardian whom it was his privilege to revere.

An illness of some months, during the latter part of which his attendants trembled for his life and reason, sufficiently attested the sincerity of the grief of Ulpius for the loss of his protector. During his paroxysms of delirium, the priests who watched round his bed, drew from his ravings many wise conclusions as to the effects that his seizure and its causes were likely to produce on his future character; but in spite of all their penetration, they were still far from appreciating to a tithe of its extent the revolution that his bereavement had wrought in his disposition. The boy himself, until the moment of the High Priest's death, had never been aware of the depth of his devotion to his second father. Warped as they had been by his natural parent, the affectionate qualities that were

the mainspring of his nature had never been entirely destroyed; and they seized on every kind word and gentle action of Macrinus, as food which had been grudged them since their birth. Morally and intellectually, Macrinus had been to him the beacon that pointed the direction of his course, the judge that regulated his conduct, the Muse that he looked to for inspiration. And now, that this link which had connected every ramification of his most cherished and governing ideas, was suddenly snapt asunder, a desolation sunk down upon his mind which at once paralysed its elasticity and withered its freshness. He glanced back, and he saw nothing but a home from whose pleasures and affections his father's ambition had exiled him for ever. He looked forward, and as he thought of his unfitness, both from character and education, to mix in the world as others mixed in it, he saw no guiding star of social happiness for the conduct of his existence to come. There was now no resource left for him, but entirely to deliver himself up to those pursuits which had made his home as a strange place to him; which

were hallowed by their connection with the lost object of his attachment, and which would confer the sole happiness and distinction that he could hope for in the wide world on his future life.

In addition to this motive for labour in his vocation, there existed in the mind of Ulpius a deep and settled feeling that animated him with unceasing ardour for the prosecution of his cherished occupations. This governing principle was detestation of the Christian sect. The suspicion that others had entertained regarding the death of the High Priest was, to his mind, a certainty. He rejected every idea which opposed his determined persuasion, that the jealousy of the Christians had prompted them to the murder, by poison, of the most powerful and zealous of the Pagan priests. To labour incessantly until he attained the influence and position formerly enjoyed by his relative, and to use that influence and position when once acquired, as the means of avenging Macrinus, by sweeping every vestige of the Christian faith from the face of the earth, were now the settled purposes of his heart.

Inspired by his determination with the deliberate wisdom which is, in most men, the result only of the experience of years, he employed the first days of his convalescence in cautiously maturing his future plans, and impartially calculating his chances of success. This self-examination completed, he devoted himself at once and for ever to his life's great design. Nothing wearied, nothing discouraged, nothing impeded him. Outward events passed by him unnoticed; the city's afflictions and the city's triumphs spoke no longer to his heart. Year succeeded to year, but Time had no tongue for him. Paganism gradually sank, and Christianity imperceptibly rose, but Change spread no picture before his eyes. The whole outward world was a void to him, until the moment arrived that beheld him successful in his designs. His preparations for the future absorbed every faculty of his nature, and left him, as to the present, a mere automaton, reflecting no principle, and animated by no event,—a machine that moved, but did not perceive,—a body that acted, without a mind that thought.

Returning for a moment to the outward world, we find that on the death of Jovian in 364, Valentinian, the new Emperor, continued the system of toleration adopted by his predecessor. On his death in 375, Gratian, the successor to the imperial throne, so far improved on the example of the two former potentates as to range himself boldly on the side of the partisans of the new faith. Not content with merely encouraging, both by precept and example, the growth of Christianity, the Emperor further testified his zeal for the rising religion, by inflicting incessant persecutions upon the rapidly decreasing advocates of the ancient worship; serving, by these acts of his reign, as pioneer to his successor, Theodosius the Great, in the religious revolution which that illustrious opponent of Paganism was destined to effect.

The death of Gratian, in 383, saw Ulpius enrolled among the chief priests of the temple, and pointed out as the next inheritor of the important office once held by the powerful and active Macrinus. Beholding himself thus secure of the

distinction for which he had laboured, the aspiring priest found leisure, at length, to look forth upon the affairs of the passing day. From every side, desolation darkened the prospect that he beheld. Already, throughout many provinces of the Empire, the temples of the gods had been overthrown by the destructive zeal of the triumphant Christians. Already hosts of the terrified people, fearing that the fate of their idols might ultimately be their own, finding themselves deserted by their disbanded priests and surrounded by the implacable enemies of the ancient faith, had renounced their worship for the sake of saving their lives and securing their property. On the wide field of Pagan ruin there now rose but one structure entirely unimpaired. The Temple of Serapis still reared its head—unshaken, unbending, unpolluted. Here the sacrifice still prospered and the people still bowed in worship. Before this monument of the religious glories of ages, even the rising power of Christian supremacy quailed in dismay. Though the ranks of its once multitudinous congregations were now perceptibly thinned, though the new

churches swarmed with converts, though the edicts from Rome denounced it as a blot on the face of the earth, its gloomy and solitary grandeur was still preserved. No unhallowed foot trod its secret recesses; no destroying hand was raised, as yet, against its ancient and glorious walls.

Indignation, but not despondency, filled the heart of Ulpius as he surveyed the situation of the Pagan world. A determination nourished as his had been by the reflections of years, and matured by incessant industry of deliberation, is above all those shocks which affect a hasty decision, or destroy a wavering intention. Impervious to failure, disasters urge it into action, but never depress it to repose. Its existence is the air that preserves the vitality of the mind—the spring that moves the action of the thoughts. Never for a moment, did Ulpius waver in his devotion to his great design, or despair of its ultimate execution and success. Though every succeeding day brought the news of fresh misfortunes for the Pagans and fresh triumphs for the Christians, still, with a few of his more zealous comrades, he per-

sisted in expecting the advent of another Julian, and a day of restoration for the dismantled shrines of the deities that he served. While the Temple of Serapis stood uninjured, to give encouragement to his labours and refuge to his persecuted brethren, there existed for him such an earnest of success as would spur him to any exertion, and nerve him against any peril.

And now, to the astonishment of priests and congregations, the silent, thoughtful, solitary Ulpius, suddenly started from his long repose, and stood forth the fiery advocate of the rights of his invaded worship. In a few days, the fame of his addresses to the Pagans who still attended the rites of Serapis, spread throughout the whole city. The boldest among the Christians, as they passed the Temple walls, involuntarily trembled when they heard the vehemence of the applause that arose from the audience of the inspired priest. Addressed to all varieties of age and character, these harangues woke an echo in every breast they reached. To the young they were clothed in all the poetry of the worship for which they pleaded. They dwelt

on the altars of Venus that the Christians would lay waste; on the woodlands that the Christians would disenchant of their Dryads; on the hallowed Arts that the Christians would arise and destroy. To the aged they called up remembrances of the glories of the past, achieved through the favour of the Gods; of ancestors who had died in their service; of old forgotten loves, and joys, and successes, that had grown and prospered under the gentle guardianship of the deities of old—while the unvarying burden of their conclusion to all, was the reiterated assertion that the illustrious Macrinus had died a victim to the toleration of the Christian sect.

But the efforts of Ulpius were not confined to the delivery of orations. Every moment of his leisure time was dedicated to secret pilgrimages into Alexandria. Careless of peril, regardless of threats, the undaunted enthusiast penetrated into the most private meeting-places of the Christians; reclaiming on every side apostates to the Pagan creed, and defying the hostility of half the city from the strong-hold of the Temple walls. Day

after day fresh recruits arrived to swell the ranks of the worshippers of Serapis. The few members of the scattered congregations of the provinces, who still remained faithful to the ancient worship, were gathered together in Alexandria by the private messengers of the unwearied Ulpius. Already tumults began to take place between the Pagans and the Christians; and even now the priests of Serapis prepared to address a protest to the new Emperor in behalf of the ancient religion of the land. At this moment it seemed probable that the heroic attempts of one man to prop the structure of superstition, whose foundations were undermined throughout, and whose walls were attacked by thousands, might actually be crowned with success.

But Time rolled on; and with him came inexorable Change, trampling over the little barriers set up against it by human opposition, and erecting its strange and transitory fabrics triumphantly in their stead. In vain did the devoted priest exert all his powers to augment and combine his scattered band; in vain did the mighty Temple display

its ancient majesty, its gorgeous sacrifices, its mysterious auguries. The spirit of Christianity was forth for triumph on the earth—the last destinies of Paganism were fast accomplishing. Yet a few seasons more of unavailing resistance passed by; and then the Archbishop of Alexandria issued his decree that the Temple of Serapis should be destroyed.

At the rumour of their Primate's determination, the Christian fanatics rose by swarms from every corner of Egypt; and hurried into Alexandria to be present at the work of demolition. From the arid solitudes of the Desert—from their convents on rocks, and their caverns in the earth, hosts of rejoicing monks flew to the city gates, and ranged themselves with the soldiery and the citizens, impatient for the assault. At the dawn of morning this assembly of destroyers was convened; and as the sun rose over Alexandria they arrived before the Temple walls.

The gates of the glorious structure were barred —the walls were crowded with their Pagan defenders. A still, dead, mysterious silence

reigned over the whole edifice; and of all the men who thronged it, one only moved from his appointed place; one only wandered incessantly from point to point, wherever the building was open to assault. Those among the besiegers who were nearest the Temple saw in this presiding genius of the preparations for defence, the object at once of their most malignant hatred, and their most ungovernable dread—Ulpius the priest.

As soon as the Archbishop gave the signal for the assault, a band of monks—their harsh discordant voices screaming fragments of psalms, their tattered garments waving in the air, their cadaverous faces gleaming with ferocious joy—led the way, placed the first ladders against the walls, and began the attack. From all sides the Temple was assailed by the infuriated besiegers, and on all sides it was successfully defended by the resolute besieged. Shock after shock fell upon the massive gates without forcing them to recede; missile after missile was hurled at the building, but no breach was made in its solid surface. Multitudes scaled the walls, gained the outer porticos, and slaugh-

tered their Pagan defenders, but were incessantly repulsed in their turn ere they could make their advantage good. Over and over again did the assailants seem on the point of storming the Temple successfully, but the figure of Ulpius, invariably appearing at the critical moment among his disheartened followers, acted like a fatality in destroying the effect of the most daring exertions and the most important triumphs. Wherever there was danger, wherever there was carnage, wherever there was despair, thither strode the undaunted priest, inspiring the bold, succouring the wounded, re-animating the feeble. Blinded by no stratagem, wearied by no fatigue, there was something almost demoniac in his activity for destruction, in his determination under defeat. The besiegers marked his course round the Temple by the calamities that befell them at his every step. If the bodies of slaughtered Christians were flung down upon them from the walls, they felt that Ulpius was there. If the bravest of the soldiery hesitated at mounting the ladders, it was known that Ulpius was directing the defeat of their com-

rades above. If a sally from the Temple drove back the advanced guard upon the reserves in the rear, it was pleaded as their excuse that Ulpius was fighting at the head of his Pagan bands. Crowd on crowd of Christian warriors still pressed forward to the attack; but though the ranks of the unbelievers were perceptibly thinned, though the gates that defended them at last began to quiver before the reiterated blows by which they were assailed, every court of the sacred edifice yet remained in the possession of the besieged, and was at the disposal of the unconquered captain who organised the defence.

Depressed by the failure of his efforts, and horrified at the carnage already perpetrated among his adherents, the Archbishop suddenly commanded a cessation of hostilities, and proposed to the defenders of the Temple a short and favourable truce. After some delay, and apparently at the expense of some discord among their ranks, the Pagans sent to the Primate an assurance of their acceptance of his terms, which were that both parties should abstain from any further

struggle for the ascendancy until an edict from Theodosius determining the ultimate fate of the Temple, should be applied for and obtained.

The truce once agreed on, the wide space before the respited edifice was gradually cleared of its occupants. Slowly and sadly the Archbishop and his followers departed from the ancient walls whose summits they had assaulted in vain; and when the sun went down, of the great multitude congregated in the morning a few corpses were all that remained. Within the sacred building, Death and Repose ruled with the night, where morning had brightly glittered on Life and Action. The wounded, the wearied, and the cold, all now lay hushed alike, fanned by the night-breezes that wandered through the lofty porticoes, or soothed by the obscurity that reigned over the silent halls. Among the ranks of the Pagan devotees but one man still toiled and thought. Round and round the Temple, restless as a wild beast that is threatened in his lair, watchful as a lonely spirit in a city of strange tombs, wandered the solitary and brooding Ulpius. For him there was no rest of

body—no tranquillity of mind. On the events of the next few days hovered the fearful chance that was soon, either for misery or happiness, to influence irretrievably the years of his future life. Round and round the mighty walls he watched with mechanical and useless anxiety. Every stone in the building was eloquent to his lonely heart—beautiful to his wild imagination. On those barren structures stretched for him the loved and fertile home; *there* was the shrine for whose glory his intellect had been enslaved, for whose honour his youth had been sacrificed! Round and round the secret recesses and sacred courts he paced with hurried footstep, cleansing with gentle and industrious hand the stains of blood and the defilements of warfare from the statues at his side. Sad, solitary, thoughtful, as in the first days of his apprenticeship to the Gods, he now roved in the same moonlit recesses where Macrinus had taught him in his youth. As the menacing tumults of the day had aroused his fierceness, so the stillness of the quiet night awakened his gentleness. He had combatted for the Temple in the morning as a son for

a parent, and he now watched over it at night as a miser over his treasure, as a lover over his mistress, as a mother over her child!

The days passed on; and at length the memorable morning arrived, which was to determine the fate of the last temple that Christian fanaticism had spared to the admiration of the world. At an early hour of the morning, the diminished numbers of the Pagan zealots met their re-inforced and determined opponents—both sides being alike unarmed—in the great square of Alexandria. The Imperial rescript was then publicly read. It began by assuring the Pagans, that their priest's plea for protection for the Temple had received the same consideration which had been bestowed on the petition against the Gods, presented by the Christian Archbishop; and ended by proclaiming the commands of the Emperor, that Serapis and all other idols in Alexandria should immediately be destroyed.

The shout of triumph that followed the conclusion of the Imperial edict still rose from the Christian ranks, when the advanced guard of the

soldiers appointed to insure the execution of the Emperor's designs appeared in the square. For a few minutes the forsaken Pagans stood rooted to the spot where they had assembled, gazing at the warlike preparations around them in a stupor of bewilderment and despair. Then as they recollected how diminished were their numbers, how arduous had been their first defence against a few, and how impossible would be a second defence against many—from the boldest to the feeblest, a panic seized on them; and, regardless of Ulpius, regardless of honour, regardless of the Gods, they turned with one accord and fled from the place!

With the flight of the Pagans the work of demolition began. Even women and children hurried to join in the welcome task of indiscriminate destruction. No defenders on this occasion barred the gates of the temple to the Christian hosts. The sublime solitude of the tenantless building was outraged and invaded in an instant. Statues were broken, gold was carried off, doors were splintered into fragments—but here for a while the progress of demolition was delayed.

Those to whom the labour of ruining the outward structure had been confided, were less successful than their neighbours who had pillaged its contents. The ponderous stones of the pillars, the massive surfaces of the walls resisted the most vigorous of their puny efforts, and forced them to remain contented with mutilating that which they could not destroy — with tearing off roofs, defacing marbles, and demolishing capitals. The rest of the building remained uninjured, and grander even now in the wildness of ruin than ever it had been in the stateliness of perfection and strength.

But the most important achievement still remained, the death-wound of Paganism was yet to be struck, the idol of Serapis which had ruled the hearts of millions, and was renowned in the remotest corners of the empire—was to be destroyed! A breathless silence pervaded the Christian ranks as they filled the hall of the God. A superstitious dread to which they had hitherto thought themselves superior, overcame their hearts, as a single soldier, bolder than his fellows, mounted by a ladder to the head of the colossal

statue, and struck at its cheek with an axe. The blow had scarcely been dealt when a deep groan was heard from the opposite wall of the apartment, followed by a noise of retreating footsteps; and then all was silent again. For a few minutes this incident stayed the feet of those who were about to join their companion in the mutilation of the idol, but after an interval their hesitation vanished, they dealt blow after blow at the statue and no more groans followed the strokes. In an incredibly short space of time the image of Serapis lay in great fragments on the marble floor. The multitude seized on the limbs of the idol and ran forth to drag them in triumph through the streets. Yet a few minutes more, and the ruins were untenanted, the Temple was silent, Paganism was destroyed!*

Throughout the ravaging course of the Christians over the Temple they had been followed with dogged perseverance, and at the same time with the most perfect impunity, by the only Pagan

* Vide "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. xxviii, p. 443.

of all his brethren who had not sought safety by flight. This man being acquainted with every private passage and staircase in the sacred building, was enabled to be secretly present at each fresh act of demolition, in whatever part of the edifice it might be perpetrated. From hall to hall, and from room to room, he tracked with noiseless step and glaring eye the movements of the Christian mob,—now hiding himself behind a pillar, now passing into concealed cavities in the walls, now looking down from imperceptible fissures in the roof; but whatever his situation, invariably watching from it, with the same industry of attention, and the same silence of emotion, the minutest acts of spoliation committed by the most humble followers of the Christian ranks. It was only when he entered with the victorious ravagers the vast apartment occupied by the idol Serapis, that the man's countenance began to give evidence of the agony under which his heart was writhing within him. He mounted a private staircase cut in the hollow of the massive wall of the room, and gaining a passage that ran round the extremities

of the ceiling, looked through a sort of lattice, concealed in the ornaments of the cornice. As he gazed down and saw the soldier mounting, axe in hand, to the idol's head, great drops of perspiration trickled from his forehead. His hot, thick breath hissed through his closed teeth, and his hands strained at the strong metal supports of the lattice, until they bent beneath his grasp. When the stroke descended on the image he closed his eyes. When the fragment detached by the blow fell on the floor, a groan burst from his quivering lips. For one moment more he glared down with a gaze of horror upon the multitude at his feet, and then with frantic speed he descended the steep stairs by which he had mounted to the roof, and fled from the Temple.

The same night this man was again seen by some shepherds, whom curiosity led to visit the desecrated building, weeping bitterly in its ruined and deserted porticos. As they approached to address him, he raised his head, and with a supplicating action signed to them to leave the place. For the few moments during which he confronted them,

the moonlight shone full upon his countenance, and the shepherds, who had in former days attended the ceremonies of the Temple, saw with astonishment that the solitary mourner whose meditations they had disturbed was no other than Ulpius the Priest.

At the dawn of day these shepherds had again occasion to pass the walls of the pillaged Temple. Throughout the hours of the night the remembrance of the scene of unsolaced, unpartaken grief that they had beheld—of the awful loneliness of misery in which they had seen the heart-broken and forsaken man, whose lightest words they had once delighted to revere—inspired them with a feeling of pity for the deserted Pagan, widely at variance with the spirit of persecution which the spurious Christianity of their day would fain have instilled in the bosoms of its humblest votaries. Bent on consolation, anxious to afford help, these men, like the Samaritan of old, went up at their own peril to succour a brother in affliction. They searched every portion of the empty building, but the object of their sympathy was nowhere to be seen. They

called, but heard no answering sound, save the dirging of the winds of early morning through the ruined halls, which but a short time since had resounded with the eloquence of the once illustrious Priest. Except a few night-birds, already sheltered by the deserted edifice, not a living being moved in what was once the temple of the Eastern world. Ulpius was gone.

These events took place in the year 389. In 390, Pagan ceremonies were made treason by the laws throughout the whole Roman empire.

From that period, the scattered few who still adhered to the ancient faith became divided into three parties; each alike insignificant, whether considered as openly or secretly inimical to the new religion of the State at large.

The first party unsuccessfully endeavoured to elude the laws prohibitory of sacrifices and divinations, by concealing their religious ceremonies under the form of convivial meetings.

The second preserved their ancient respect for the theory of Paganism, but abandoned all hope and intention of ever again accomplishing its

practice. By such timely concessions, many were enabled to preserve—and some even to attain—high and lucrative employments as officers of the State.

The third retired to their homes, the voluntary exiles of every religion; resigning the practice of Paganism as a necessity, and shunning the communion of Christians as a matter of choice.

Such were the unimportant divisions into which the last remnants of the once powerful Pagan community now subsided; but to none of them was the ruined and degraded Ulpius ever attached.

For five weary years—dating from the epoch of the prohibition of Paganism—he wandered through the Empire, visiting in every country the ruined shrines of his deserted worship—a friendless, hopeless, solitary man!

Throughout the whole of Europe and all of Asia and the East that still belonged to Rome, he bent his slow and toilsome course. In the fertile valleys of Gaul, over the burning sands of Africa, through the sun-bright cities of Spain, he travelled—unfriended as a man under a curse, lonely as a second Cain. Never for an instant did the

remembrance of his ruined projects desert his memory, or his mad determination to revive his worship abandon his mind. At every relic of Paganism however slight, that he encountered on his way, he found a nourishment for his fierce anguish, an employment for his vengeful thoughts. Often, in the little villages, children were frightened from their sports in a deserted temple, by the apparition of his gaunt, rigid figure among the tottering pillars, or the sound of his hollow voice as he muttered to himself among the ruins of the Pagan tombs. Often, in crowded cities, groups of men, congregated to talk over their remembrances of the fall of Paganism, found him listening at their sides, and comforting them when they carelessly regretted their ancient faith, with a smiling and whispered assurance that a time of restitution would yet come. By all opinions and in all places he was regarded as a harmless madman, whose strange delusions and predilections were not to be combatted, but to be indulged. Thus he wandered through the Christian world; regardless alike of lapse of time and change of climate; living within

himself; mourning, as a luxury, over the fall of his worship; patient of wrongs, insults, and disappointments; watching for the opportunity that he still persisted in believing was yet to arrive; holding by his fatal determination, with all the recklessness of ambition and all the perseverance of revenge.

The five years passed away unheeded, uncalculated, unregretted by Ulpius. For him, living but in the past, hoping but for the future, space held no obstacles—time was an oblivion. Years pass as days, hours as moments, when the varying emotions which mark their existence on the memory, and distinguish their succession on the dial of the heart, exist no longer either for happiness or woe. Dead to all freshness of feeling, the mind of Ulpius, during the whole term of his wanderings, lay numbed beneath the one idea that possessed it. It was only at the expiration of those unheeded years, when the chances of travel turned his footsteps towards Alexandria, that his faculties burst from the long bondage which had oppressed them. Then—when he passed through

those gates which he had entered in former years a proud ambitious boy, when he walked ungreeted through the ruined Temple where he had once lived illustrious and revered—his dull, cold thoughts arose strong and vital within him. The spectacle of the scene of his former glories, which might have awakened despair in others, aroused the dormant passions, emancipated the stifled energies in *him*. The projects of vengeance and the visions of restoration which he had brooded over for five long years, now rose before him, as realised already under the vivid influence of the desecrated scenes around. As he stood beneath the shattered porticos of the sacred place, not a stone crumbling at his feet but rebuked him for his past inaction, and strengthened him for daring, for conspiracy, for revenge, in the service of the outraged gods. The ruined temples he had visited in his gloomy pilgrimages now became revived by his fancy; as, one by one, they rose on his toiling memory. Broken pillars soared from the ground; desecrated idols re-occupied their vacant pedestals; and he, the exile and the mourner, stood forth once again

—the ruler, the teacher, and the priest. The time of restitution was come—though his understanding supplied him with no distinct projects, his heart urged him to rush blindly on the execution of his reform. The moment had arrived—Macrinus should yet be avenged; the Temple should at last be restored.

He descended into the city; he hurried—neither welcomed nor recognised—through the crowded streets; he entered the house of a man who had once been his friend and colleague in the days that were past; and poured forth to him his wild determinations and disjointed plans, entreating his assistance, and promising him a glorious success. But his old companion had become, by a timely conversion to Christianity, a man of property and reputation in Alexandria; and he turned from the friendless enthusiast with indignation and contempt. Repulsed, but not disheartened, Ulpius sought others whom he had known in his prosperity and renown. They had all renounced their ancient worship—they all received him with studied coldness or careless disdain; but he still persisted in

his useless efforts. He blinded his eyes to their contemptuous looks; he shut his ears to their derisive words. Persevering in his self-delusion, he appointed them messengers to their brethren in other countries; captains of the conspiracy that was to commence in Alexandria; orators before the people when the memorable revolution had once begun. It was in vain that they refused all participation in his designs, he left them as the expressions of refusal rose to their lips; and hurried elsewhere, as industrious in his efforts, as devoted to his unwelcome mission, as if half the population of the city had vowed themselves joyfully to aid him in his frantic attempt.

Thus, during the whole day, he continued his labour of useless persuasion among those in the city who had once been his friends. When the evening came, he repaired, weary but not despondent, to the earthly paradise that he was determined to regain—to the Temple where he had once taught, and where he still imagined that he was again destined to preside. Here, he proceeded, ignorant of the new laws, careless of dis-

covery and danger, to ascertain by divination, as in the days of old, whether failure or success awaited him, ultimately, in his great design.

Meanwhile, the friends whose assistance Ulpius had determined to extort, were far from remaining inactive on their parts after the departure of the aspiring priest. They remembered with terror that the laws affected as severely those concealing their knowledge of a Pagan intrigue, as those actually engaged in directing a Pagan conspiracy; and their anxiety for their personal safety, overcoming every consideration of the dues of honour, or the claims of ancient friendship, they repaired in a body to the Prefect of the city, and informed him, with all the eagerness of apprehension, of the presence of Ulpius in Alexandria, and of the culpability of his proposed designs.

A search after the devoted Pagan was immediately commenced. He was found the same night before a ruined altar, brooding over the entrails of an animal that he had just sacrificed. Further proof of his guilt could not be required. He was taken prisoner; led forth the next morning to be

judged, amid the execrations of the very populace who had almost adored him once; and condemned the following day to suffer the penalty of death.

At the appointed hour the populace assembled to behold the execution. To their indignation and disappointment, however, when the officers of the city appeared before the prison, it was only to inform the spectators that the performance of the fatal ceremony had been adjourned. After a mysterious delay of some weeks, they were again convened, not to witness the execution, but to receive the extraordinary announcement that the culprit's life had been spared, and that his amended sentence now condemned him to labour as a slave for life, in the copper mines of Spain.

What powerful influence induced the Prefect to risk the odium of reprieving a prisoner whose guilt was so satisfactorily ascertained as that of Ulpius, never was disclosed. Some declared that the city magistrate was still at heart a Pagan, and that he consequently shrunk from authorising the death of a man who had once been the most illustrious among the professors of the ancient

creed. Others reported that Ulpius had secured the leniency of his judges by acquainting them with the position of one of those secret repositories of enormous treasure, supposed to exist beneath the foundations of the dismantled Temple of Serapis. But the truth of either of these rumours could never be satisfactorily proved. Nothing more was accurately discovered than that Ulpius was removed from Alexandria to the place of earthly torment set apart for him by the zealous authorities, at the dead of night, and that the sentry at the gate through which he departed heard him mutter to himself as he was hurried onward, that his divinations had prepared him for failure, but that the great day of Pagan restoration would yet arrive.

* * * * *

In the year 407, twelve years after the events above narrated, Ulpius entered the city of Rome.

He had not advanced far before the gaiety and confusion in the streets appeared completely to bewilder him. He hastened to the nearest public garden that he could perceive, and avoiding the

frequented paths, flung himself down, apparently fainting with exhaustion, at the foot of a tree.

For some time he lay on the shady resting-place which he had chosen, gasping painfully for breath, his frame ever and anon shaken to its centre by sudden spasms, and his lips quivering with an agitation which he vainly endeavoured to suppress. So changed was his aspect, that the guards who had removed him from Alexandria, wretched as was his appearance even then, would have found it impossible to recognise him now as the same man, whom they had formerly abandoned to slavery in the mines of Spain. The effluvia exhaled from the copper ore in which he had been buried for twelve years, had not only withered the flesh upon his bones, but had imparted to its surface a livid hue, almost death-like in its dulness. His limbs, wasted by age and distorted by suffering, bent and trembled beneath him, and his form, once so majestic in its noble proportions, was now so crooked and misshapen that whoever beheld him could only have imagined that he must have been deformed from his birth. Of the former

man no characteristic remained but the expression of the stern, mournful eyes; and these, the truthful interpreters of the indomitable mind whose emotions they seemed created to express, preserved, unaltered by suffering and unimpaired by time, the same look, partly of reflection, partly of defiance, and partly of despair, which had marked them in those past days when the Temple was destroyed and the congregations of the Pagans dispersed.

But the repose at this moment demanded by his worn-out body was even yet denied to it by his untamed, unwearied mind; and as the voice of his old delusion spoke within him again, the devoted Priest rose from his solitary resting-place, and looked forth upon the great city, whose new worship he was vowed to overthrow.

"By years of patient watchfulness," he whispered to himself, "have I succeeded in escaping successfully from my dungeon among the mines. Yet a little more cunning, a little more endurance, a little more vigilance, and I shall still live to people, by my own exertions, the deserted temples of Rome!"

As he spoke, he emerged from the grove into the street. The joyous sunlight—a stranger to him for years—shone warmly down upon his face, as if to welcome him to liberty and the world. The sounds of gay laughter rang in his ears, as if to woo him back to the blest enjoyments and amenities of life; but Nature's influence, and man's example, were now silent alike to his lonely heart. Over its dreary wastes still reigned the ruthless ambition that had exiled love from his youth, and friendship from his manhood, and that was destined to end its mission of destruction by banishing tranquillity from his age. Scowling fiercely at all around and above him, he sought the loneliest and shadiest streets. Solitude had now become a necessity to his heart. The "great gulph" of his unshared aspirations had long since socially separated him for ever from his fellow-men. He thought, laboured, and suffered for himself alone.

To describe the years of unrewarded labour and unalleviated hardship endured by Ulpius in the place of his punishment; to dwell on the day that

brought with it—whatever the season in the world above—the same unvarying inheritance of exertion and fatigue; to chronicle the history of night after night of broken slumber one hour, of wearying thought the next, would be to produce a picture, from the mournful monotony of which, the attention of the reader would recoil with disgust. It will be here sufficient to observe, that the influence of the same infatuation which had nerved him to the defence of the assaulted Temple, and encouraged him to attempt his ill-planned restoration of Paganism, had preserved him through sufferings under which stronger and younger men would have sunk for ever; had prompted his determination to escape from his slavery; and had now brought him to Rome,—old, forsaken, and feeble as he was, to risk new perils, and suffer new afflictions, for the cause to which, body and soul, he had ruthlessly devoted himself for ever.

Urged, therefore, by his miserable delusion, he had now entered a city where even his name was unknown, faithful to his frantic project of opposing himself as a helpless, solitary man, against the

people and government of an Empire. During his term of slavery, regardless of his advanced years, he had arranged a series of projects, the gradual execution of which would have demanded the advantages of a long and vigorous life. He no more desired, as in his former attempt at Alexandria, to precipitate at all hazards the success of his designs. He was now prepared to watch, wait, plot and contrive, for years on years; he was resigned to be contented with the poorest and slowest advancement—to be encouraged by the smallest prospect of ultimate triumph. Acting under this determination, he started his project, by devoting all that remained of his enfeebled energies to cautiously informing himself, by every means in his power, of the private, political, and religious sentiments of all men of influence in Rome. Wherever there was a popular assemblage, he attended it to gather the scandalous gossip of the day; wherever there was a chance of overhearing a private conversation, he contrived to listen to it unobserved. About the doors of taverns and the haunts of discharged servants, he

lurked noiseless as a shadow, attentive alike to the careless revelations of intoxication, or the scurrility of malignant slaves. Day after day passed on, and still saw him devoted to his occupation, (which, servile as it was in itself, was to his eyes ennobled by its lofty end,) until at the expiration of some months, he found himself in possession of a vague and inaccurate fund of information, which he stored up as a priceless treasure in his mind. He next discovered the name and abode of every nobleman in Rome, suspected even of the most careless attachment to the ancient form of worship. He attended Christian churches, mastered the intricacies of different sects, and estimated the importance of contending schisms; gaining this collection of heterogeneous facts under the combined disadvantages of poverty, solitude, and age; dependent for support on the poorest public charities, and for shelter on the meanest public asylums. Every conclusion that he drew from all he learned, partook of the sanguine character of the fatal self-deception which had embittered his whole life. He believed that the dissensions

which he saw raging in the church would, ere long, effect the destruction of Christianity itself; that when such a period should arrive, the public mind would require but the guidance of some superior intellect to return to its old religious predilections; and that to lay the foundation for effecting in such a manner the desired revolution, it was necessary for him,—impossible though it might seem, in his present degraded condition,—to gain access to the disaffected nobles of Rome, and discover the secret of acquiring such an influence over them as would enable him to infect them with *his* enthusiasm, and fire them with *his* determination. Greater difficulties even than these had been overcome by other men. Solitary individuals had, ere this, originated revolutions. The gods would favour him; his own cunning would protect him. Yet a little more patience,—a little more determination, and he might still, after all his misfortunes, be assured of success!

It was about this period that he first heard, while pursuing his investigations, of an obscure man, who had suddenly arisen to undertake a reformation in

the Christian church; whose declared aim was to rescue the new worship from that very degeneracy, on the fatal progress of which rested all his hopes of triumph. It was reported that this man had been for some time devoted to his reforming labours, but that the difficulties attendant on the task that he had appointed for himself, had hitherto prevented him from attaining all the notoriety essential to the satisfactory prosecution of his plans. On hearing this rumour, Ulpius immediately joined the few who attended the new orator's discourses, and then heard enough to convince him that he listened to the most determined zealot for Christianity in the city of Rome. To gain this man's confidence, to frustrate every effort that he might make in his new vocation, to ruin his credit with his hearers, and to threaten his personal safety by betraying his inmost secrets to his powerful enemies in the Church, were determinations instantly adopted by the Pagan as duties demanded by the exigencies of his creed. From that moment he seized every opportunity of favourably attracting the new reformer's

attention to himself, and, as the reader already knows, he was at length rewarded for his cunning and perseverance by being received into the household of the charitable and unsuspicious Numerian, as a pious convert to the Christianity of the early church.

Once installed under Numerian's roof, the treacherous Pagan saw in the Christian's daughter, an instrument admirably adapted, in his unscrupulous hands, for forwarding his wild project of obtaining the ear of a Roman of power and station who was disaffected to the established worship. Among the patricians of whose anti-Christian predilections report had informed him, was Numerian's neighbour, Vetranio the senator. To such a man, renowned for his life of luxury, a girl so beautiful as Antonina would be a bribe rich enough to enable him to extort any promise required, as a reward for betraying her while under the protection of her father's house. In addition to this advantage to be drawn from her ruin, was the certainty that her loss would so affect Numerian, as to render him, for a time at least, incapable of

pursuing his labours in the cause of Christianity. Fixed then in his detestable purpose, the ruthless priest patiently awaited the opportunity of commencing his machinations. Nor did he watch in vain. The victim innocently fell into the very trap that he had prepared for her, when she first listened to the music of Vetranio's lute, and permitted her treacherous guardian to become the friend, who concealed her disobedience from her father's ear. After that first fatal step every day brought the projects of Ulpius nearer to success. The long-sought interview with the senator was at length obtained, the engagement imperatively demanded on the one side, was, as we have already related, carelessly accepted on the other; the day that was to bring success to the schemes of the betrayer, and degradation to the honour of the betrayed, was appointed; and once more the cold heart of the fanatic warmed to the touch of joy. No doubts upon the validity of his engagement with Vetranio ever entered his mind. He never imagined that the powerful senator could with perfect impunity

deny him the impracticable assistance he had demanded as his reward, and thrust him as an ignorant madman from his palace gates. Firmly and sincerely he believed that Vetranio was so satisfied with his readiness in pandering to his profligate designs, and so dazzled by the prospect of the glory which would attend success in the great enterprise, that he would gladly hold to the performance of his promise whenever it should be required of him. In the meantime the work was already begun. Numerian was, even now, through his agency, watched by the spies of a jealous and unscrupulous Church. Feuds, schisms, treacheries, and dissensions, marched bravely onward through the Christian ranks. All things combined to make it certain that the time was near at hand when, through his exertions and the friendly senator's help, the restoration of Paganism might be assured.

With the widest diversity of pursuit and difference of design, there was still a strange and mysterious analogy between the temporary positions of Ulpius and Numerian. One was prepared

to be a martyr for the Temple; the other to be a martyr for the Church. Both were enthusiasts in an unwelcome cause; both had suffered more than a life's wonted share of affliction; and both were old—passing irretrievably from their fading present on earth, to the eternal future awaiting them in the unknown spheres beyond.

But here—with their position—the comparison between them ends. The Christian's principle of action, drawn from the Divinity he served, was love: the Pagan's, born of the superstition that was destroying him, was hate. The one laboured for mankind; the other for himself. And thus, the aspirations of Numerian, founded on the general good, nourished by offices of kindness, and nobly directed to a generous end, might lead him into indiscretion, but could never degrade him into crime—might trouble the serenity of his life, but could never deprive him of the consideration of hope. While, on the contrary, the ambition of Ulpius, originating in revenge and directed to destruction, exacted cruelty from his heart, and duplicity from his mind; and,

as the reward for his service, mocked him alternately throughout his whole life with delusion and despair.

* * * * *

And now, ere we proceed further, let us view that solitary old man—the history of whose priesthood has drawn to a close—musing over his pitiless projects, in the gloomy retreat to which he betook himself when his victim had disappeared from his sight, bearing to her chamber—whose purity he dreads not to defile—the fragment of her broken lute. Let us think of him in his childhood, as fresh from his Creator's hands, docile and affectionate, ready to learn and happy to obey, gifted with all the capacities for good, provided with all the perceptions for happiness—and then let us look on him in his age as warped by the interference of man. Behold him sitting alone, with no children to play round his knees; no remembrances of past loves and past kindnesses to gild his gloomy Present; no watchful friends, no heavenward aspirations to disperse the terrors of the death-bed prospect which already lowers before

him. That crooked, tottering body has travelled through many nations, but has never once set forward on any mission of good. Those stern, dreary eyes have glared in anger, and sparkled in disdain; but years have passed, and no pity has softened them, no tears have stood in their sunken depths. Even now, as he looks forth on the sky, the moonlight that trembles on his withered cheeks holds no communion with his loveless heart; and the heaven that spreads above him, beautiful though it now is in its night adornment of soft, transparent shade, is void and speechless to his unheedful mind. His thoughts are of past injuries and future vengeance; of that treachery whose beginning is to be signalled by the dawn of day; of the trusting father and innocent daughter, whose happiness he can wreck without remorse, at the bidding of the evil delusion which has held prisoned his better faculties for life. Such is he now—in heart and soul chained fast to his monstrous end; in body a ruin, and in mind a deformity. The education that perverted his childhood, the aspirations that deluded his youth, and

the ambition that degraded his manhood, have completed their work; and now, the old age of crime is fast smoothing the way to the last consequence of all—the death of despair.*

* For the various historical events mentioned in this Chapter, see "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEDCHAMBER.

It is now time to resume our chronicle of the eventful night, which marked the destruction of Antonina's lute and the conspiracy against Antonina's honour.

The gates of Vetranio's palace were closed, and the noises in it were all hushed, the banquet was over, the triumph of the Nightingale Sauce had been achieved, and the day-break was already glimmering in the eastern sky, when the senator's favoured servant, the freedman Carrio, drew back the shutter of the porter's lodge, where he had been dozing since the conclusion of the feast, and looked out lazily into the street. The dull, faint light of dawn was now strengthening slowly over the lonely roadway and on the walls of the lofty

houses. Of the groups of idlers of the lowest class who had assembled during the evening in the street, to snuff the fragrant odours which steamed afar from Vetranio's kitchens, not one remained; men, women, and children had long since departed to seek shelter wherever they could find it, and to fatten their lean bodies on what had been charitably bestowed on them of the coarser relics of the banquet. The mysterious solitude and tranquillity of day-break in a great city prevailed over all things. Nothing impressed, however, by the peculiar and solemn attraction of the scene at this moment, the freedman apostrophised the fresh morning air, as it blew over him, in strong terms of disgust, and even ventured, in lower tones, to rail against his master's uncomfortable fancy for being awakened after a feast at the approach of dawn. Far too well aware, nevertheless, of the necessity of yielding the most implicit obedience to the commands he had received, to resign himself any longer to the pleasant temptations of repose, Carrio, after yawning, rubbing his eyes, and indulging for a few moments more in

the luxury of complaint, set forth in earnest to follow the corridors leading to the interior of the palace, and to awaken Vetranio without further delay.

He had not advanced more than a few steps, when a proclamation written in letters of gold on a blue-coloured board, and hung against the wall at his side, attracted his attention. This public notice, which delayed his progress at the very outset, and which was intended for the special edification of all the inhabitants of Rome, was thus expressed :—

"On this day, and for ten days following, the affairs of our Patron oblige him to be absent from Rome."

Here the proclamation ended, without descending to particulars. It had been put forth, in accordance with the easy fashion of the age, to answer at once all applications at Vetranio's palace, during the senator's absence. Although the colouring of the board, the writing of the letters, and the composition of the sentence were the work of his own ingenuity, the worthy Carrio

could not prevail upon himself to pass the proclamation without contemplating its magnificence anew. For some time he stood regarding it with the same expression of lofty and complacent approbation, which we see in these modern days, illuminating the countenance of a connoisseur before one of his own old pictures, which he has bought as a great bargain; or dawning over the bland features of a linendraper, as he surveys from the pavement his morning's arrangement of the window of the shop. All things, however, have their limits, even a man's approval of an effort of his own skill. Accordingly, after a prolonged review of the proclamation, some faint ideas of the necessity of immediately obeying his master's commands revived in the mind of the judicious Carrio, and counselled him to turn his steps at once in the direction of the palace sleeping-apartments.

Greatly wondering what new caprice had induced the senator to contemplate leaving Rome at the dawn of day—for Vetranio had divulged to no one the object of his departure—the freedman cautiously entered his master's bedchamber. He

drew aside the ample silken curtains suspended around and over the sleeping couch, from the hands of Graces and Cupids sculptured in marble; but the statues surrounded an empty bed. Vetranio was not there. Carrio next entered the bath-room; the perfumed water was steaming in its long marble basin; the soft wrapping-cloths lay ready for use; the attendant slave, with his instruments of ablution, waited, half asleep, in his accustomed place; but here also no signs of the master's presence appeared. Somewhat perplexed, the freedman examined several other apartments. He found guests, dancing girls, parasites, poets, painters—a motley crew—occupying every kind of dormitory, and all peacefully engaged in sleeping off the effects of the wine they had drunk at the banquet; but the great object of his search still eluded him as before. At last it occurred to him that the senator, in an excess of convivial enthusiasm and jovial hospitality, might yet be detaining some favoured guest at the table of the feast.

Pausing, therefore, at some carved doors which stood ajar at one extremity of a spacious hall, he

pushed them open, and hurriedly entered the banquetting-room beyond.

A soft, dim, luxurious light reigned over this apartment, which now presented, as far as the eye could discern, an aspect of confusion that was at once graceful and picturesque. Of the various lamps, of every variety of pattern, hanging from the ceiling, but few remained alight. From those, however, which were still unextinguished, there shone a mild brightness, admirably adapted to display the objects immediately around them. The golden garlands, and the alabaster pots of sweet ointment, which had been suspended before the guests during the banquet, still hung from the painted ceiling. On the massive table, composed partly of ebony and partly of silver, yet lay in the wildest confusion, fragments of gastronomic delicacies, grotesque dinner-services, vases of flowers, musical instruments, and crystal dice; while towering over all, rose the glittering dish which had contained the nightingales consumed by the feasters, with the four golden Cupids, which had spouted over them that illustrious invention—the

Nightingale Sauce. Beyond the couches, of violet and rose-colour, surrounding the table, the perfumed and gaily-tinted powders that had been strewn over the marble floor were perceptible for a few yards; but beyond this point nothing more was distinctly distinguishable. The eye roved down the sides of the glorious chamber, catching dim glimpses of gorgeous draperies, crowded statues, and marble columns, but discerning nothing accurately, until it reached the half-opened windows, and rested upon the fresh dewy verdure, now softly perceptible in the shady gardens without. There—waving in the morning breezes, charged on every leaf with their burden of pure and welcome moisture—rose the lofty pine trees, basking in the recurrence of the new day's beautiful and undying youth, and rising in reproving contrast before the exhausted allurements of luxury, and the perverted creations of art, which burdened the polluted tables of the hall within.

After a hasty survey of the apartment, the freedman appeared to be on the point of quitting it in despair, when the noise of a falling dish, followed

by several partly suppressed and wholly confused exclamations of affright, caught his ear. He once more approached the banquetting table, retrimmed a lamp that hung near him, and taking it in his hand passed to the side of the room whence the disturbance proceeded. A hideous little negro staring in ludicrous terror at a silver oven, half filled with bread, which had just fallen beside him, was the first object he discovered. A few paces beyond the negro reposed a beautiful boy, crowned with vine leaves and ivy, still sleeping by the side of his lyre; and further yet, stretched in an uneasy slumber on a silken couch, lay the identical object of the freedman's search—the illustrious author of the Nightingale Sauce.

Immediately above the sleeping senator hung his portrait, in which he was modestly represented as rising by the assistance of Minerva to the top of Parnassus, the nine Muses standing round him rejoicing. At his feet reposed a magnificent white cat, whose head rested in all the luxurious laziness of satiety on the edge of a golden saucer half filled with dormice stewed in milk. The most

indubitable evidences of the night's debauch appeared in Vetranio's disordered dress and flushed countenance, as the freedman regarded him. For some minutes the worthy Carrio stood uncertain whether to awaken his master or not, deciding finally, however, on obeying the commands he had received, and disturbing the slumbers of the wearied voluptuary before him. To effect this purpose it was necessary to call in the aid of the singing-boy, for by a refinement of luxury, Vetranio had forbidden his attendants to awaken him by any other method than the agency of musical sounds.

With some difficulty the boy was sufficiently aroused to comprehend the service that was required of him. For a short time the notes of the lyre sounded in vain. At last, when the melody took a louder and more martial character, the sleeping Patrician slowly opened his eyes, and stared vacantly around him.

"My respected patron"—said the polite Carrio, in apologetic tones—"commanded that I should awaken him with the dawn; the daybreak has already appeared."

When the freed-man had ceased speaking, Vetranio sat up on the couch, called for a basin of water, dipped his fingers in the refreshing liquid, dried them abstractedly on the long silky curls of the singing-boy who stood beside him, gazed about him once more, repeated interrogatively the word "Daybreak," and sunk gently back upon his couch. We are grieved to confess it—but the author of the Nightingale Sauce was moderately inebriated.

A short pause followed, during which the freed-man and the singing-boy stared upon each other in mutual perplexity. At length the one resumed his address of apology, and the other his efforts on the lyre. Once more, after an interval, the eyes of Vetranio lazily unclosed, and this time he began to speak; but his thoughts—if thoughts they could be called—were as yet wholly occupied by the "table-talk" at the past night's banquet.

"The ancient Egyptians—oh, sprightly and enchanting Camilla,—were a wise nation!" murmured the senator drowsily. "I am myself descended from the ancient Egyptians; and, therefore, I hold in high veneration that cat in your lap, and

all cats besides. Herodotus—an historian whose works I feel a certain gratification in publicly mentioning as good—informs us, that when a cat died in the dwelling of an ancient Egyptian, the owner shaved his eyebrows as a mark of grief, embalmed the defunct animal in a consecrated house, and carried it to be interred in a considerable city of Lower Egypt, called 'Bubastis'—an Egyptian word which I have discovered to mean The Sepulchre of all the Cats; whence it is scarcely erroneous to infer—"

At this point the speaker's powers of recollection and articulation suddenly failed him, and Carrio—who had listened with perfect gravity to his master's oration upon cats—took immediate advantage of the opportunity now afforded him to speak again.

"The equipage which my patron was pleased to command to carry him to Aricia," said he, with a strong emphasis on the last word, "now stands in readiness at the private gate of the palace gardens."

As he heard the word "Aricia," the senator's powers of recollection and perception seemed sud-

denly to return to him. Among that high order of drinkers who can imbibe to the point of perfect enjoyment, and stop short scientifically before the point of perfect oblivion, Vetranio occupied an exalted rank. The wine he had swallowed during the night had disordered his memory and slightly troubled his self-possession, but had not deprived him of his understanding. There was nothing plebeian even in his debauchery; there was an art and a refinement in his very excesses.

"Aricia—Aricia," he repeated to himself, "ah, the villa that Julia lent to me at Ravenna! The pleasures of the table must have obscured for a moment the image of my beautiful pupil of other days, which now revives before me again, as Love resumes the dominion that Bacchus usurped! My excellent Carrio," he continued, speaking to the freed-man, "you have done perfectly right in awakening me; delay not a moment more in ordering my bath to be prepared, or my man-monster Ulpius, the king of conspirators and high-priest of all that is mysterious, will wait for me in vain! And you, Glyco," he pursued when Carrio

had departed, addressing the singing-boy, "array yourself for a journey, and wait with my equipage at the garden gate. I shall require you to accompany me in my expedition to Aricia. But first, oh gifted and valued songster, let me reward you for the harmonious symphony that has just awakened me. Of what rank of my musicians are you, at present, Glyco?"

"Of the fifth," replied the boy.

"Were you bought, or born in my house?" asked Vetranio.

"Neither; but bequeathed to you by Geta's testament," rejoined the gratified Glyco.

"I advance you," continued Vetranio, "to the privileges and the pay of the first rank of my musicians; and I give you, as a proof of my continued favour, this ring. In return for these obligations, I desire you to keep secret whatever concerns my approaching expedition; to employ your softest music in soothing the ear of a young girl who will accompany us—in calming her terrors if she is afraid, in drying her tears if she weeps; and finally, to exercise your voice and your lute

incessantly, in uniting the name 'Antonina' to the sweetest harmonies of sound that your imagination can suggest."

Pronouncing these words with an easy and benevolent smile, and looking round complacently on the display of luxurious confusion about him, Vetranio retired to the bath that was to prepare him for his approaching triumph.

Meanwhile a scene of a very different nature was proceeding without, at Numerian's garden-gate. Here were no singing boys, no freedmen, no profusion of rich treasures,—here appeared only the solitary and deformed figure of Ulpius, half-hidden among surrounding trees, while he waited at his appointed post. As time wore on, and still Vetranio did not appear, the Pagan's self-possession began to desert him. He moved restlessly backwards and forwards over the soft dewy grass, sometimes in low tones calling upon his gods to hasten the tardy footsteps of the libertine patrician, who was to be made the instrument of restoring to the Temple the worship of other days,—sometimes cursing the reckless delay of the

senator, or exulting in the treachery by which he madly believed his ambition was at last to be fulfilled; but still, whatever his words or thoughts, wrought up to the same pitch of fierce, fanatic enthusiasm which had strengthened him for the defence of his idols at Alexandria, and had nerved him against the torment and misery of years, in his slavery in the copper mines of Spain.

The precious moments were speeding irrevocably onwards. His impatience was rapidly changing to rage and despair, as he strained his eyes for the last time in the direction of the palace gardens, and now at length discerned a white robe among the distant trees. Vetranio was rapidly approaching him.

Restored by his bath, no effect of the night's festivity but its exhilaration remained in the senator's brain. But for a slight uncertainty in his gait, and an unusual vacancy in his smile, the elegant gastronome might now have appeared to the closest observer guiltless of the influence of intoxicating drinks. He advanced radiant with exultation, prepared for conquest, to the place

where Ulpius awaited him, and was about to address the Pagan with that satirical familiarity so fashionable among the nobles of Rome in their communications with the people, when the object of his intended pleasantries sternly interrupted him, saying, in tones more of command than of advice, "Be silent! If you would succeed in your purpose, follow me without uttering a word!"

There was something so fierce and determined in the tones of the old man's voice—low, tremulous and husky though they were—as he uttered these words, that the bold, confident senator instinctively held his peace as he followed his stern guide into Numerian's house. Avoiding the regular entrance, which at that early hour of the morning was necessarily closed, Ulpius conducted the patrician through a small wicket into the subterranean apartment, or rather outhouse, which was his customary, though comfortless, retreat in his leisure hours, and which was hardly ever entered by the other members of the Christian's household.

From the low, arched, brick ceiling of this

place, hung one earthenware lamp whose light, small and tremulous, left all the corners of the apartment in perfect obscurity. The thick buttresses that projected inwards from the walls, made visible by their prominence, displayed on their surfaces rude representations of idols and temples drawn in chalk and covered with strange, mysterious hieroglyphics. On a block of stone which served as a table lay some fragments of small statues, which Vetranio recognised as having belonged to the old, accredited representations of Pagan idols. Over the sides of the table itself were scrawled in Latin characters these two words, "Serapis," "Macrinus," and about its base lay some pieces of torn, soiled linen, which still retained enough of their former character both in shape, size and colour, to convince Vetranio that they had once served as the vestments of a Pagan priest. Further than this the senator's observation did not carry him, for the close, almost mephitic atmosphere of the place already began to affect him unfavourably. He felt a suffocating sensation in his throat, and a dizziness in his head.

The restorative influence of his recent bath declined rapidly. The fumes of the wine he had drank in the night, far from having been as he imagined permanently dispersed, again mounted to his head. He was obliged to lean against the stone table to preserve his equilibrium, as he faintly desired the Pagan to shorten their sojourn in his miserable retreat.

Without even noticing the senator's request, Ulpius hurriedly proceeded to erase the drawings on the buttresses and the inscriptions on the table. Then collecting the fragments of statues and the pieces of linen, he deposited them in a hiding-place in the corner of the apartment. This done, he returned to the stone against which Vetranio supported himself, and for a few minutes silently regarded the senator with a firm, earnest and penetrating gaze.

A dark suspicion that he had betrayed himself into the hands of a villain, who was then plotting some atrocious project connected with his safety or honour, began to rise on the senator's bewildered brain, as he unwillingly submitted to the pene-

trating examination of the Pagan's glance. At that moment, however, the withered lips of the old man slowly parted, and he began to speak. Whether as he looked on Vetranio's disturbed countenance, and marked his unsteady gait, the heart of Ulpius, for the first time since his introduction to the senator, misgave him when he thought of their monstrous engagement; or whether the near approach of the moment that was henceforth, as he wildly imagined, to fix Vetranio as his assistant and ally, so powerfully affected his mind that it instinctively sought to vent its agitation through the natural medium of words, it is useless to inquire. Whatever his motives for speech, the impressive earnestness of his manner gave evidence of the depth and intensity of his emotions, as he addressed the senator thus:—

"I have submitted to servitude in a Christian's house, I have suffered the contamination of a Christian's prayers, to gain the use of your power and station when the time to employ them should arrive. The hour has now come when *my* part of

the conditions of our engagement is to be performed, the hour will yet come when *your* part shall be exacted from *you* in turn! Do you wonder at what I have done and at what I will do? Do you marvel that a household drudge should speak thus to a nobleman of Rome? Are you astonished that I risk so much as to venture on enlisting *you*—by the sacrifice of the girl who now slumbers above—in the cause, whose end is the restoration of our father's gods, and in whose service I have suffered and grown old? Listen, and you shall hear from what I am fallen—you shall know what I once was!

"My birth, my parents, my education, my ancient abode—these I will not disclose. I have sworn by my gods, that until the day of restitution these secrets of my past life shall remain unrevealed to stranger's ears. Unknown, I entered Rome, and unknown I will labour in Rome until the projects I have lived for are crowned with success! It is enough that I confess to you that with those sacred images, whose fragments you have just beheld, I was once lodged;

that those sacred vestments whose remains you discerned at your feet, I once wore. To attain the glories of the Priesthood there was nothing that I did not resign, to preserve them there was nothing I did not perform, to recover them there is nothing that I will not attempt! I was once illustrious, prosperous, beloved; of my glory, my happiness, my popularity, the Christians have robbed me; and I will yet live to requite it heavily at their hands! I had a guardian who loved me in my youth, the Christians murdered him! A Temple was under the rule of my manhood, the Christians destroyed it! The people of a whole nation once listened to my voice, the Christians have dispersed them! The wise, the great, the beautiful, the good, were once devoted to me, the Christians have made me a stranger at their doors, an outcast of their affections and thoughts! For all this shall I take no vengeance? Shall I not plot to rebuild my ruined Temple, and win back, in my age, the honours that adorned me in my youth?

"To mount over the bodies of the Christian

slain to rebuild the altars that the Christians have overthrown, is the ambition that has made light to me the sufferings of my whole life. I have battled, and it has sustained me in the midst of carnage; I have wandered, and it has been my home in the desert; I have failed, and it has supported me; I have been threatened with death, and it has preserved me from fear; I have been cast into slavery, and it has made my fetters light. You see me now, old, degraded, lonely—believe that I long neither for wife, children, tranquillity, nor possessions; that I desire no companion but my cherished and exalted purpose! Remember then, in the hour of performance, the promise you have now made to aid me in the achievement of that purpose! Remember that you are a Pagan yourself! Feast, laugh, carouse with your compeers, be still the airy jester, the gay companion; but never forget the end to which you are vowed—the destiny of glory that the restoration of our deities has in store for us both!"

He ceased. Though his voice while he spoke never rose beyond a hoarse, monotonous, half-

whispering tone, all the ferocity of his abused and degraded nature was for the instant thoroughly aroused by his recapitulation of his wrongs. Had Vetranio at this moment shown any symptoms of indecision, or spoken any words of discouragement, he would have murdered him on the spot where they stood. Every feature in the Pagan's seared and livid countenance expressed the stormy emotions that were rushing over his heart as he now confronted his bewildered, yet attentive listener. His firm, menacing position; his poor and scanty garments; his wild shaggy hair; his crooked, distorted form; his stern, solemn, unwavering gaze; opposed as they were (under the fitful illumination of the expiring lamp and the advancing daylight) to the unsteady gait, the vacant countenance, the rich robes, the youthful grace of form and delicacy of feature of the object of his steady contemplation, made so wild and strange a contrast between his patrician ally and himself, that they scarcely looked like beings of the same race. Nothing could be more immense than the difference—more wild than the incongruity between

them. It was sickness hand-in-hand with health; pain marshalled face to face with enjoyment; darkness ranged in monstrous discordance by the very side of light.

The next instant,—just as the astonished senator was preparing to frame a suitable answer to the strange address of which he had been the object,—Ulpius seized him by the arm; and, opening a door at the inner extremity of the apartment, led him up some stairs that conducted to the interior of the house.

They passed the hall, on the floor of which still lay the fragments of the broken lute, dimly distinguishable in the soft light of day-break; and, ascending another staircase, paused at a little door at the top, which Ulpius cautiously opened; and in a moment afterwards Vetranio was admitted into Antonina's bedchamber.

The room was of no great extent; its scanty furniture was of the most ordinary description; no ornaments glittered on its walls; no frescos adorned its ceilings; and yet there was a simple elegance in its appearance, an unobtrusive pro-

priety in its minutest details, that made it at once interesting and attractive to the eye. From the white curtains at the window to the vase of flowers that stood by the bedside, the same natural refinement of taste appeared in the arrangement of all that the apartment contained. No sound broke the deep silence of the place save the low, soft breathing, occasionally interrupted by a long, trembling sigh, of its sleeping occupant. Its sole light consisted of a little lamp so placed in the middle of the flowers round the sides of the vase, that its small radiance cast no extended or steady illumination upon any part of the room. There was something in the decent propriety of all that was visible in the bedchamber; in the soft obscurity of its atmosphere; in the gentle and musical sound that alone interrupted its magical stillness, impressive enough, it might have been imagined, to have awakened some hesitation in the bosom of the boldest libertine, ere he deliberately proceeded to intrude on the unprotected slumbers of its occupant. No such feeling of indecision, however, troubled the thoughts of

Vetranio as he cast a rapid glance round the apartment which he had ventured so treacherously to invade. The fumes of the wine he had imbibed at the banquet had been so thoroughly resuscitated by the oppressive atmosphere of the subterranean retreat he had just quitted, as to have left him nothing of his more refined nature. All that was honourable or intellectual in his character had now completely ceded to all that was base and animal. He looked round, and perceiving that Ulpius had silently quitted him, softly closed the door. Then advancing to the bedside with the utmost caution compatible with the involuntary unsteadiness of an intoxicated man, he took the lamp from the vase in which it was half concealed, and earnestly surveyed by its light the figure of the sleeping girl.

The head of Antonina was thrown back and rested rather over than on her pillow. Her light linen dress had become so disordered during the night that it displayed her throat and part of her bosom, in all the dawning beauties of their youthful formation, to the gaze of the licentious Roman.

One hand half supported her head, and was almost entirely hidden in the locks of her long, black hair, which had escaped from the white cincture intended to confine it, and now streamed over the pillow in dazzling contrast to the light bed furniture around it. The other hand held tightly clasped to her bosom the precious fragment of her broken lute. The deep repose expressed in her position had not thoroughly communicated itself to her face. Now and then her slightly parted lips moved and trembled, and ever and anon a change, so faint and fugitive that it was hardly perceptible, appeared in her complexion, breathing on the soft olive that was its natural hue, the light rosy flush which the emotions of the past night had impressed on it ere she slept. Her position, in its voluptuous negligence, seemed the very type of Oriental loveliness, while her face, calm and sorrowful in its expression, displayed the more refined and sober graces of the European model. And thus these two characteristics of two different orders of beauty, appearing conjointly under one form, produced a whole so various and yet so

harmonious, so impressive and yet so attractive, that the senator, as he bent over the couch, though the warm, soft breath of the young girl played on his cheeks, and waved the tips of his perfumed locks, could hardly imagine that the scene before him was more than a bright, delusive dream.

While Vetranio was yet absorbed in admiration of her charms, Antonina's form slightly moved, as if agitated by the influence of a passing dream. The change thus accomplished in her position, broke the spell that its former stillness and beauty had unconsciously wrought to restrain the unhallowed ardour of the profligate Roman. He now passed his arm round her warm, slender figure; and gently raising her till her head rested on his shoulder as he sat by the bed, imprinted kiss after kiss on the pure lips that sleep had innocently abandoned to him.

As he had forseen, Antonina instantly awoke; but to his unmeasured astonishment neither started nor shrieked. The moment she had opened her eyes she had recognised the person of Vetranio; and that overwhelming terror which suspends in

its victims the use of every faculty, whether of the body or the mind, had immediately possessed itself of her heart. Too innocent to imagine the real motive that prompted the senator's intrusion on her slumbers, where others of her sex would have foreboded dishonour, *she* feared death. All her father's vague denunciations against the enormities of the nobles of Rome, rushed in an instant over her mind, and her childish imagination pictured Vetranio as armed with some terrible and mysterious vengeance to be wreaked on her for having avoided all communication with him, as soon as she had gained possession of her lute. Prostrate beneath the petrifying influence of her fears, motionless and powerless before him as its prey before the serpent, she made no effort to move or speak; but looked up stedfastly into the senator's face, her large eyes fixed and dilated in a gaze of overpowering terror.

Intoxicated though he was, the affrighted expression of the poor girl's pale, rigid countenance did not escape Vetranio's notice; and he taxed his bewildered brain for such soothing and

reassuring expressions as would enable him to introduce his profligate proposals with some chance that they would be listened to and understood.

"Dearest pupil! Most beautiful of Roman maidens," he began in the husky, monotonous tones of inebriety, "abandon your fears! I come hither, wafted by the breath of love, to restore the worship of the—I would say to bear you on my bosom to a villa—the name of which has for the moment escaped my remembrance. You cannot have forgotten that it was I who taught you to compose the Nightingale Sauce—or, no—let me rather say to play upon the lute. Love, music, pleasure, all await you in the arms of your attached Vetranio. Your eloquent silence speaks encouragement to my heart. Beloved Anto——"

Here the senator suddenly paused, for the eyes of the girl which had hitherto been fixed on him with the same expression of blank dismay that had characterised them from the first, slowly moved in the direction of the door. The instant afterwards, a slight noise caught Vetranio's ear, and Antonina huddered so violently as he pressed her to his

side, that he felt it through his whole frame. Slowly and unwillingly he withdrew his gaze from the pale, yet lovely countenance on which it had been fixed, and looked up.

At the open door, pale, silent, motionless, stood the master of the house.

Incapable from the confusion of his ideas of any other feeling than the animal instinct of self-defence, Vetranio no sooner beheld Numerian's figure, than he rose, and drawing a small dagger from his bosom attempted to advance on the intruder. He found himself, however, restrained by Antonina, who had fallen on her knees before him, and grasped his robe with a strength which seemed utterly incompatible with the slenderness of her form and the feebleness of her sex and age.

The first voice that broke the silence which ensued was Numerian's. He advanced, his face ghastly with anguish, his lip quivering with suppressed emotions, to the senator's side, and addressed him thus:—

"Put up your weapon, I come but to ask a favour at your hands."

Vetranio mechanically obeyed him. There was something in the stern calmness, frightful at such a moment, of the Christian's manner that awed him in spite of himself.

"The favour I would petition for," continued Numerian, in low, steady, bitter tones, "is that you would remove your harlot there, to your own abode. Here, are no singing boys, no banquetting halls, no perfumed couches. The retreat of a solitary old man is no place for such an one as she. I beseech you remove her to a more congenial home. She is well fitted for her trade, her mother was a harlot before her!"

He laughed scornfully, and pointed as he spoke to the figure of the unhappy girl kneeling with outstretched arms at his feet.

"Father, father!" she cried, in accents bereft of their native softness and melody, "have you forgotten me?"

"I know you not!" he replied, thrusting her from him — "Return to *his* bosom, you shall never more be pressed to *mine!* Go to *his* palace, *my* house is yours no longer! You

are *his* harlot, not *my* daughter! I command you—go!"

As he advanced towards her with fierce glance and threatening demeanour, she suddenly rose up. Her reason seemed crushed within her, as she looked with frantic earnestness from Vetranio to her father, and then back again from her father to Vetranio. On one side she saw an enemy who had ruined her she knew not how, and threatened her with she knew not what; on the other a parent who had cast her off. For one instant she directed a final look on the room, that, sad and lonely though it was, had still been a home to her; and then without a word or a sigh she turned, and crouching like a beaten dog, fled from the house.

During the whole of the scene Vetranio had stood so fixed in the helpless astonishment of intoxication, as to be incapable of moving or uttering a word. All that took place during the short and terrible interview between father and child, utterly perplexed him. He heard no loud, violent anger on one side, no clamorous petitioning

for forgiveness on the other. The stern old man whom Antonina had called father, and who had been pointed out to him as the most austere Christian in Rome, far from avenging his intrusion on Antonina's slumber, had voluntarily abandoned his daughter to his licentious will. That the anger or irony of so severe a man should inspire such an action as this, or that Numerian, like his servant, was plotting to obtain some strange mysterious favour from him by using Antonina as a bribe, seemed perfectly impossible. All that passed before the senator was, to his bewildered imagination, thoroughly incomprehensible. Frivolous, thoughtless, profligate as he might be, his nature was not radically base, and when the scene of which he had been the astounded witness was abruptly terminated by the flight of Antonina, the look of frantic misery fixed on him by the unfortunate girl at the moment of her departure, almost sobered him for the instant, as he stood before the now solitary father gazing vacantly around him with emotions of uncontrollable confusion and dismay.

Meanwhile a third person was now approaching to join the two occupants of the bedchamber abandoned by its ill-fated mistress. Although in the subterranean retreat to which he had retired on leaving Vetranio, Ulpius had not noticed the silent entrance of the master of the house, he had heard through the open doors the sound, low though it was, of the Christian's voice. As he rose, suspecting all things and prepared for every emergency, to ascend to the bedchamber, he saw, while he mounted the lowest range of stairs, a figure in white pass rapidly through the hall and disappear by the principal entrance of the house. He hesitated for an instant and looked after it, but the fugitive figure had passed so swiftly in the uncertain light of early morning that he was unable to identify it, and he determined to ascertain the progress of events, now that Numerian must have discovered a portion at least of the plot against his daughter and himself, by ascending immediately to Antonina's apartment, whatever might be the consequences of his intrusion at such an hour on her father's wrath.

As soon as the Pagan appeared before him, a sensible change took place in Vetranio. The presence of Ulpius in the chamber was a positive relief to the senator's perturbed faculties, after the mysterious, overpowering influence that the moral command expressed in the mere presence of the father and the master of the house, at such an hour, had exercised over them. Over Ulpius he had an absolute right, Ulpius was his dependant; and he determined, therefore, to extort from the servant whom he despised, an explanation of the mysteries in the conduct of the master whom he feared, and the daughter whom he began to doubt.

"Where is Antonina?" he cried, starting as if from a trance, and advancing fiercely towards the treacherous Pagan, "She has left the room—she must have taken refuge with you."

With a slow and penetrating gaze Ulpius looked round the apartment. A faint agitation was perceptible in his livid countenance, but he uttered not a word.

The senator's face became pale and red with alternate emotions of apprehension and rage. He

seized the Pagan by the throat, his eyes sparkled, his blood boiled, he began to suspect even then that Antonina was lost to him for ever.

"I ask you again where is she?" he shouted in a voice of fury. "If through this night's work she is lost or harmed, I will revenge it on *you*. Is this the performance of your promise? Do you think that I will direct your desired restoration of the gods of old for this? If evil comes to Antonina through your treachery, sooner than assist you in your secret projects, I would see you and your accursed deities all burning together in the Christians' hell! Where is the girl, you slave? Villain, where was your vigilance when you let that man surprise us at our first interview?"

He turned towards Numerian as he spoke. Trouble and emergency gift the faculties with a more than mortal penetration. Every word that he had uttered had eaten its burning way into the father's heart. Hours of narrative could not have convinced him how fatally he had been deceived, more thoroughly than the few hasty expressions he had just heard. No word passed his lips—no

action betrayed his misery. He stood before the spoilers of his home, changed in an instant from the courageous enthusiast to the feeble, helpless, heart-broken man.

Though all the ferocity of his old Roman blood had been roused in Vetranio, as he threatened Ulpius, the father's look of cold, silent, frightful despair froze it in his young veins in an instant. His heart was still the impressible heart of youth; and, struck for the first time in his life with emotions of horror and remorse, he advanced a step to offer such explanation and atonement as he best might, when the voice of Ulpius suspended his intentions, and made him pause to listen.

"She passed me in the hall," muttered the Pagan doggedly, "I did *my* part in betraying her into your power—it was for *you* to hinder her in her flight. Why did you not strike him to the earth," he continued, pointing with a mocking smile to Numerian, "when he surprised you? You are wealthy and a noble of Rome; murder would have been no crime in you!"

"Stand back!" cried the senator, thrusting him

from the position he had hitherto occupied in the door-way. "She may be recovered even yet! All Rome shall be searched for her!"

The next instant he disappeared from the room, and the master and servant were left together alone.

The silence that now reigned in the apartment was broken by distant sounds of uproar and confusion in the streets of the city beneath. These ominous noises had arisen with the dawn of day, but the different emotions of the occupants of Numerian's abode had so engrossed them, that the turmoil in the outer world had passed unheeded by all. No sooner, however, had Vetranio departed than it caught the attention of Ulpius, and he advanced to the window. What he there saw and heard was of no ordinary importance, for it at once fixed him to the spot where he stood, in mute and ungovernable surprise.

While Ulpius was occupied at the window, Numerian had staggered to the side of the bed which his ill-timed severity had made vacant, perhaps for ever. The power of action, the capacity

to go forth and seek his child himself, was entirely suspended in the agony of her loss, as the miserable man fell on his knees, and in the anguish of his heart endeavoured to find solace in prayer. In the positions they severally occupied the servant and the master long remained—the betrayer watching at the window, the betrayed mourning at his lost daughter's bed—both alike silent, both alike unconscious of the lapse of time.

At length, apparently unaware at first that he was not alone in the room, Numerian spoke. In his low, broken, tremulous accents, none of his adherents would have recognised the voice of the eloquent preacher—the bold chastiser of the vices of the Church. The whole nature of the man—moral, intellectual, physical—seemed fatally and completely changed.

"She was innocent, she was innocent!" he whispered to himself. "And even had she been guilty, was it for me to drive her from my doors! My part, like my Redeemer's, was to teach repentance and to show mercy! Accursed be the pride and anger that drove justice and patience

from my heart, when I beheld her, as I thought, submitting herself without a struggle or a cry, to my dishonour, and hers! Could I not have imagined her terror, could I not have remembered her purity? Alas, my beloved, if I myself have been the dupe of the wicked, what marvel is it that you should have been betrayed as well! And I have driven you from me, you, from whose mouth no word of anger ever dropped! I have thrust you from my bosom, you, who were the adornment of my age! My death approaches, and you will not be by to pardon my heavy offence, to close my weary eyes, to mourn by my solitary tomb! God—oh God! If I am left thus lonely on the earth, thou hast punished me beyond what I can bear!"

He paused—his emotions for the instant bereft him of speech. After an interval, he muttered to himself in a low, moaning voice—"I called her harlot! My pure, innocent child! I called her harlot—I called her harlot!"

In a paroxysm of despair, he started up and looked distractedly around him. Ulpius still stood

motionless at the window. At the sight of the ruthless Pagan he trembled in every limb. All those infirmities of age that had been hitherto spared him, seemed to overwhelm him in an instant. He feebly advanced to his betrayer's side, and addressed him thus;—

"I have lodged you, taught you, cared for you; I have never intruded on your secrets, never doubted your word, and for all this, you have repaid me by plotting against my daughter and deceiving *me!* If your end was to harm me by assailing my child's happiness and honour you have succeeded! If you would banish me from Rome, if you would plunge me into obscurity, to serve some mysterious ambition of your own, you may dispose of me as you will! I bow before the terrible power of your treachery! I will renounce whatever you command, if you will restore me to my child! I am helpless and miserable; I have neither heart nor strength to seek her myself! You, who know all things and can dare all dangers, may restore her to pardon and bless me, if you will! Remember, whoever you really are, that

you were once helpless and alone, and that you are still old, like me! Remember that I have promised to abandon to you whatever you desire! Remember that no woman's voice can cheer me, no woman's heart feel for me, now that I am old and lonely, but my daughter's! I have guessed from the words of the nobleman whom you serve, what are the designs you cherish and the faith you profess; I will neither betray the one, nor assault the other! I thought that my labours for the Church were more to me than anything on earth, but now, that through my fault, my daughter is driven from her father's roof, I know that she is dearer to me than the greatest of my designs; I must gain her pardon; I must win back her affection before I die! You are powerful and can recover her! Ulpius! Ulpius!"

As he spoke the Christian knelt at the Pagan's feet. It was terrible to see the man of affection and integrity thus humbled before the man of heartlessness and crime!

Ulpius turned to behold him, then without a word he raised him from the ground, and thrusting

him to the window, pointed with flashing eyes to the wide view without.

The sun had arisen high in the heaven and beamed in dazzling brilliancy over Rome and the suburbs. A vague, fearful, mysterious, desolation seemed to have suddenly overwhelmed the whole range of dwellings beyond the walls. No sounds rose from the gardens, no population idled in the streets. The ramparts on the other hand were crowded at every visible point with people of all ranks, and the distant squares and amphitheatres of the city itself, swarmed like ant-hills to the eye with the crowds that struggled within them. Confused cries and strange wild noises rose at all points from these masses of human beings. The whole of Rome seemed the prey of a vast and universal revolt.

Extraordinary and affrighting as was the scene at the moment when he beheld it, it passed unheeded before the eyes of the scarce conscious father. He was blind to all sights but his daughter's form, deaf to all sounds but her voice; and he murmured as he looked vacantly

forth upon the wild view before him, "Where is my child—where is my child!"

"What is your child to *me?* What are the fortunes or affections of man or woman, at such an hour as this?" cried the Pagan, as he stood by Numerian, with features horribly animated by the emotions of fierce delight and triumph that were raging within him at the prospect he beheld. "Dotard, look from this window! Listen to those voices! The gods whom I serve, the gods whom you and your worship would fain have destroyed, have risen to avenge themselves at last! Behold those suburbs—they are left desolate! Hear those cries—they are from Roman lips! While your household's puny troubles have run their course, this city of apostates has been doomed! In the world's annals this morning will never be forgotten! THE GOTHS ARE AT THE GATES OF ROME!" *

* Vide note, in Appendix—"The Goths at the gates of Rome."

APPENDIX.

BOOK II. CHAPTER I.

THE POPULATION OF ROME.

The principal source from which the author has derived such information regarding the social condition of the people of the Roman Empire, as he has endeavoured to convey to the reader in a graphic manner in the text, will be found in the subjoined extracts from the powerful and brilliant work of Sismondi, "Histoire de la Chute de l' Empire Romain," ed. Paris 1835.

The first quotation enumerates and describes, generally, the different classes into which the people of the Empire were divided :—

"Mais c'est surtout dans l'etat des personnes qu'il faut chercher les causes de l'extreme foiblesse de l'empire romain. Nous pouvons distinguer dans l'empire six classes d' habitans : nous trouvons d'abord des familles sénatoriales, propriétaires d' immenses territoires et d' immenses richesses, qui avoient successivement envahi dans les campagnes les heritages de tous les petits proprietaires ; puis des habitans des grandes villes, melange d'artisans et d'affranchis, qui vivoient du luxe des riches, qui participoient à leur corruption, et qui se faisoient redouter du gouvernement par des seditions, jamais de l' ennemi par du courage ; des habitans de petites villes, appauvris, méprisés et opprimés ; des colons et des esclaves dans les campagnes ; des bagaudes enfin dans les bois, qui pour se dérober à l'oppression s'étoient voués au brigandage.

"La partie plus relevée de la nation peut communiquer au gouvernement la sagesse et la vertu, si elle-même est sage et vertueuse ; mais elle ne lui donnera point la force, car la force vient toujours d'en bas ; elle procède toujours de la grande masse. Or, dans l'empire romain, cette masse si variée dans sa langue, ses mœurs, sa religion, ses habitudes, si sauvage au milieu de la civilisation, si opprimée et si abrutie, étoit à peine aperçue de ceux qui vivoient de ses sueurs ; elle est à peine mentionnée par les historiens ; elle languit dans la misère, elle dépérit, elle disparut presque dans quelques provinces, sans qu'on ait daigné nous en avertir ; et ce n'est que par une suite de comparaisons qu'on parvient à connoître sa destinée."—Tome i. pp. 30-31.

Speaking more particularly of the lower classes in the towns and cities, the historian remarks :—

"Ces grandes villes étoient elles-mêmes peuplées en très grande partie, d'artisans soumis à un régime assez sévère, d'affranchis et d'esclaves ; mais elles contenoient aussi un nombre, beaucoup plus grand que de nos jours, d'hommes qui, se contentant du plus absolu nécessaire passoient leur vie dans l'oisiveté. Toute cette population étoit également désarmée, également étrangère à la patrie, également timide devant l'ennemi et incapable de se défendre ; mais comme elle étoit rassemblée, le pouvoir lui montroit quelque respect. Dans toutes les villes du premier ordre, il y avoit des distributions gratuites de vivres, tout comme il y avoit dans le cirque et dans les théâtres des courses de chars, des jeux, et des spectacles gratuits. La légèreté, l'amour du plaisir, l'oubli de l'avenir qui ont toujours caractérisé la populace des grandes villes, suivirent les Romains provinciaux au travers des dernières calamités de leur empire."—Tome i. p. 36.

Of the condition of the slaves the following picture is presented :—

"Les esclaves, de nouveau, formoient deux classes, ceux qui étoient nés sur la propriété du maître, et qui n'ayant par conséquent point d'autre domicile, point d'autre patrie, inspiroient un peu plus de confiance ; et ceux qu'on avoit achetés.

Les premiers vivoient dans des corps de ferme ou dans des cases bâties tout autour, sous les yeux de leur commandeur, à peu près comme les nègres des colonies ; toutefois, les mauvais traitemens, l'avarice de leurs supérieurs, la misère, le désespoir, diminuoient sans cesse leur nombre ; aussi un commerce très actif s'occupoit dans tout l'empire romain de recruter sans cesse leurs ateliers, par des captifs faits à la guerre. Les victoires des armées romaines, souvent aussi celles des barbares, en combattant les uns contre les autres, souvent encore les punitions infligées par les empereurs ou leurs lieutenans, à des villes, à des provinces, qui s'étoient révoltées, et dont tous les habitans étoient vendus sous la lance du préteur, fournissoient cette seconde classe aux marchands d'esclaves, aux dépens de tout ce qu'il y avoit de plus précieux dans la population. Ces misérables travailloient presque constamment, avec des chaînes aux pieds ; on les excédoit de fatigue, pour dompter ainsi leur vigueur et leur ressentiment, puis on les enfermoit chaque nuit dans des ergastules souterrains.

" La souffrance effroyable d'une si grande partie de la population, sa haine envenimée contre ceux qui l'opprimoient, avoient multiplié les révoltes d'esclaves, les complots, les assassinats et les empoisonnemens. En vain une loi sanguinaire faisoit mettre à mort tous les esclaves d'un maître assassiné, la vengeance et le désespoir n'en multiplioient pas moins les crimes. Ceux qui s'étoient déjà vengés, ceux qui n'avoient pu le faire, mais sur qui planoient des soupçons, s'enfuyoient dans les bois, et ne vivoient plus que de brigandage. * * * * Ils aggravoient, par leurs attaques, la condition de ceux qui tout récemment encore étoient leurs compagnons d'infortune : des districts, des provinces entières, étoient successivement abandonnés par les cultivateurs, et les bois et les bruyères succédoient aux anciennes moissons."—Tome i., pp. 33, 34, 35.

The effect of the revolts of the slaves on the small landholders is thus subjoined :—

" Le riche sénateur réparoit quelquefois ses pertes, ou

obtenoit les secours de l'autorité pour défendre son bien; mais le petit propriétaire qui cultivoit lui-même son champ ne pouvoit échapper à tant de désordres et de violences; sa vie comme toute sa fortune étoient chaque jour en danger. Il se hâtoit donc de se défaire de son patrimoine à tout prix, toutes les fois qu'un de ses opulens voisins vouloit l'acheter; souvent aussi il l'abandonnoit sans compensation; souvent il étoit exproprié par les prétentions du fisc et le poids accablant des charges publiques: aussi toute cette classe de cultivateurs libres qui, plus qu'une autre connoît l'amour de la patrie, qui peut défendre le sol, et qui doit fournir les meilleurs soldats, disparut bientôt entièrement. Le nombre des propriétaires diminua à tel point qu'un homme opulent, un homme de famille sénatoriale, avoit le plus souvent dix lieues à faire avant de rencontrer un égal ou un voisin: aussi quelques uns d'entre eux, propriétaires de provinces entières, étoient déjà considérés comme de petits souverains."—Tome i., p. 35.

Some idea of the politic lenity displayed by the Church in estimating the crimes of the Emperor Constantine may be formed from the following passage. The reader of history will find no reason to suppose, as he advances to later dates, that the ecclesiastics of the age of Honorius were less unscupulously attached to their temporal interests than their predecessors of the age of Constantine.

"Dans le palais qu'il avoit rendu désert, après avoir fait périr son beau-père, ses beaux-frères, sa sœur, sa femme, son fils, son neveu, Constantin auroit senti le remords, si de faux prêtres, des évêques courtisans, n'avoient endormi sa conscience. Nous avons encore les panégyriques dans lesquelles ils le représentent comme un favori du ciel, comme un saint digne de toute notre vénération. Nous avons aussi plusieurs des lois par la publication desquelles Constantin rachetoit ses crimes aux yeux des prêtres, en comblant l'église de faveurs inouïes."—Tome i. p. 116.

BOOK II. CHAPTER V.

THE GOTHS AT THE GATES OF ROME.

To those readers who may be desirous of consulting an uninterrupted narrative of the events immediately preceding the siege of Rome by the Goths, as simply related by an ancient historian, the extract from Zosimus which follows may perhaps prove acceptable. The quotation is taken from an old English translation of the Greek writer, published at London, in 1684, and entitled "The New History of Count Zosimus, sometime Advocate of the Treasury of the Roman Empire. Newly Englished."

After mentioning the unfavourable reception by the Emperor Honorius, of Alaric's final proposals for a peace, the history proceeds:—

"The Emperor refused him his request, although he must have of necessity done one thing or other of two that were before him, if he would have disposed of his affairs the right way. For he must either have deferred the war and procured a peace for some small sum, or if he would rather fight, he ought to have mustered up all the legions that he could, and posted them in the enemy's way, to obstruct the barbarians from coming any further on. Besides which, he should have chosen a fit man to lead them, and made Sarus general of the war, who in his own person was sufficient to strike a terror into the enemy, upon account both of his courage and his experience in warlike affairs, and had also a number of barbarians under him, enough to make a good defence. But he, on the contrary, neither embracing the offer of peace, nor making Sarus his friend, nor mustering up the Roman army, but placing all his hopes in the desires and wishes of Olympius, was the cause of so many calamities to the commonwealth. For he made such men commanders as were contemptible in the esteem of the enemy,—to wit,

Turpilio, whom he made general of the horse, Varanes of the foot, Vigilantius of the domestics; and so of all other things accordingly. Upon which account all men despaired, and seemed to have the utter ruin of Italy before their eyes.

"Now seeing these things were thus ordered, Alarichus began his expedition against Rome, and laughed at the preparations made by Honorius. And because he would not go about such a weighty business with only equal, but rather far greater forces than his enemy, he sent for his wife's brother, called Ataulphus, out of the upper Pannonia, to be his partner in the action, as having a very considerable number of Goths and Huns to bring along with him. Yet, nevertheless, he did not stay for his brother-in-law's coming, but marching forward in haste, passed by Acquileia and all the other cities in order that lie beyond the river Po; I mean Concordia, Altinum, and Cremona. And when he had crossed the river, being as it were at some festival, and having no enemy to stop him, he came into a certain castle of Bononia, which they call Œcubaria, and from whence passing by all Æmilia, and leaving Ravenna behind him, he came to Ariminium, a great city of Flaminia. But moving by that also with speed, as he did by all the rest that were in that province, he came into Picenum, which is a nation lying in the extremity of the Ionian Bay. And from thence marching towards Rome, he sacked all the cities and towns that were in his way."—Book v.

END OF VOLUME I.

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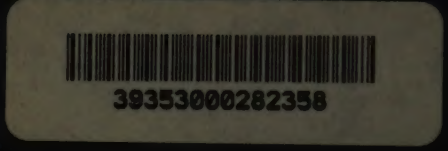
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